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ELEAZAR.



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ELEAZAR ;
AN
INTERESTING NARRATIVE
OF ONE OF
THE JEWISH CONVERTS
ON THE
DAY OF PENTECOST ;

SUPPOSED TO BE RELATED BY HIMSELF.

BY **THOMAS BINGHAM,**
AUTHOR OF "WILLIAM CHURCHMAN," &c.

"Call to remembrance the former days."
PAUL.

"Surget Gens Aurea Mundo."
VIRGIL.

"Who is this that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the
moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners?"
SOLOMON.

"Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."
JESUS CHRIST.

London :
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1824.

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PREFACE.

WHAT was the cause that so lately influenced the minds of many thinking men to reject Christianity as an imposture? The resistless reasons which had induced men of superior minds than themselves possessed, to acknowledge its divine original had not been refuted; no new and powerful arguments had been adduced to invalidate their force; no discoveries had been made of a better system to substitute in its stead; wherefore, then, was it that so universal a clamour was raised against it, and a storm ensued which, after its cessation, has left such remains of its ravages throughout Europe?

The cause originated in the professors of Christianity themselves; the representation that was made of it by their creeds and their lives (especially the latter, for even philosophers are generally better judges of conduct than of principle) was so different from its portrait in the New Testament, that the distorted caricature shocked every reflecting mind which was not acquainted with the lovely original, and, being mistaken for a just resemblance, induced multitudes to retire into the gloomy thickets of infidelity to avoid so disgusting a spectacle.

But the experiment of rendering men wise, good, peaceable, and happy, without the religion of the Bible, has been fairly tried, and has completely failed. The rejected Bible has been again sought as the

only messenger of consolation to the unhappy, and many have drank the healing balm it affords.

Yet, when we compare the representation our lives afford, with the holy tendency of the truths we profess, we must honestly acknowledge a striking dissimilarity; and it may be very profitable to attempt a delineation of Christianity as practically exhibited in its purity, that, struck with the contrast, we may be stimulated to love religion more consistently.

These views influenced me to commence a train of thought which at first almost imperceptibly led to the idea of this little work; and if, in any instance, it should stir up an inconsistent professor of Christianity to a life more suitable to the holy religion he professes, or should enable

an inquirer to distinguish between the religion of the gospel and its counterfeits, in each case my desire will be gratified, and God shall have the glory.

As the scene is laid in Judea, and in that period of the Jewish history, which was, of all others, the most eventful and important, I may not improperly request of any of the seed of Abraham, into whose hands it may fall, to give it a candid perusal, and examine the principles it contains, as derived from their own prophets; and may the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, open their eyes by his Spirit, to discern, in the despised Nazarene, that Messiah, whose day, beheld at an immense distance, rejoiced the heart of their venerable ancestor.

ELEAZAR.



COMPARING the present appearance of the religion of Jesus Christ in the world, with the representation made of it in the New Testament, I was induced to embody that representation in the form of a narrative, and to describe a series of supposed facts, founded on its principles, and calculated to exhibit forcibly the effects they must have produced on those who acted under their influence, in the various scenes of human life. I therefore took the liberty of creating an imaginary character, and of exhibiting him as the relator of his own history, and that of the times he lived in, to a circle of the exiled Christians

who found refuge, during the siege of Jerusalem, in the retired situation of Pella.

Let us then at once introduce him, and hear him speak for himself:—

“ My name is Eleazar Ben Joseph ; my father, Joseph Ben Hezekiah, was a native of the village of Bethphage, where I also was born, about twelve years after the birth of Jesus the Messiah.

My parent being of the sect of the Pharisees, I was of course instructed diligently by him in all their self-righteous tenets and superstitious observances, nor did he neglect, in my early years, to give me the most earnest and affectionate cautions against the infidel system of the Sadducees, and the loose and accommodating maxims of the Herodians.

But when Jesus began to teach and to preach in the city and its vicinity, I still recollect the superior earnestness and pathos of his warnings against the Impostor ; so warmly he appeared to feel on the subject, that his whole soul seemed to be infused into his words, and I imbibed his spirit while I listened to his maxims, and found enmity

against the detested Nazarene “grow with my growth, and strengthen with my strength.”

After my father had communicated to me all the knowledge he possessed himself, he sent me to Jerusalem to study the law and the prophets, with the traditions and comments of the elders, under the famous Gamaliel, the most esteemed doctor of laws in the holy city, whose lectures I attended with the greatest diligence, and soon obtained an high place in his esteem, being excelled by none of his pupils, except Saul of Tarsus, whose uncommon attainments were soon extensively noticed, and betwixt whom and myself congenial sentiments and feelings soon produced a most intimate friendship.

Often, I now recollect with deep regret, in our familiar conversations with each other, when the Nazarene was our subject, our hearts burning with rage like the infernals, we were wont to rail, in language unbecoming the gravity of our character, at the blind stupidity and folly of the vulgar horde in being duped by one whose very parentage, occupation, and

appearance, rendered him, in our view, an object worthy only of sovereign contempt.

“ My life at this period was regulated by the most austere and strict precepts of our sanctimonious sect. I regularly fasted twice in the week, and was very plain and moderate in my diet at all times. I observed the strictest simplicity and neatness in my dress; my countenance wore the most grave and solemn appearance; I was careful to abstain from the outward acts of vice, and was frequent, long, loud, and eloquent in my prayers. I spent daily many hours in diligently reading and studying the law and the prophets, with the notes, comments, and traditions of the scribes and elders, which I considered as equally valid and important with the text; and I vainly imagined that no man could possibly stand on higher ground than myself in the favour of the God of Israel, nor possess more substantial reason to expect some very exalted and conspicuous post of honour in the future universal kingdom, which I believed the Messiah would come ere long to erect and establish.

Nevertheless, I acknowledge, that occasionally, when I had been reading some passages in the prophets, and especially in the Psalms of David, I have not been able to avoid feeling myself struck forcibly with the idea that those holy men of God paid a more particular regard to the purity of the heart, and to the exact regulation of its thoughts, purposes, and motives, than I did: but then I endeavoured to consider their expressions as the mere hyperbolical flights of poetic language, and by no means as tending to point me out as a deficient character, when compared with them; a supposition my self-righteous heart could not bear to admit; and besides, as I always tasked myself more heavily with reading and praying whenever I discovered any thing amiss in my conduct, and also occasionally made a free-will offering at the temple, I soon silenced all the remonstrances of my conscience, and became perfectly well pleased with myself.

Averse as I was to hear the Seducer, as I esteemed him, I did, on one occasion only, at the solicitation of one of my fellow pupils,

(who had observed to me repeatedly, that if some of us did not hear him, and judge from our personal knowledge, we should not be able effectually to undeceive our poor ignorant and unsuspecting neighbours, who were deceived by his artful and insinuating address,) attend his preaching, the subject of which, at that time, was the Prodigal Son; and I own, that when I first beheld him, the openness and honesty apparent in his countenance, struck me as being quite different from what my previous ideas of his character would have led me to expect, and when he began his subject, the artless and unaffected simplicity of the story, the very natural turns of affection it displayed, and the energetic pathos of his delivery, interested me in spite of myself, and I listened awhile with pleasing surprise; but when he proceeded to describe, in the character of the elder brother, the temper of a Pharisee's heart, my whole soul was roused to indignation, and had I not been fearful that I should thereby have degraded the solemnity of my character, I could gladly have thrown off my mantle, and joined with

the meanest of the bigotted rabble in stoning him to death.

The ardour of my natural disposition, united to the flattering prospects my religious ambition presented to me, excited me to active diligence in that work for which the Pharisees were famous—that of making proselytes ; and as my respectable situation in the college made me known and esteemed throughout the city, I found no difficulty of obtaining ready access to the conversation of the richest and most respectable among the numerous strangers who, either on account of business, or with a view to pleasure, visited Jerusalem, an advantage which I endeavoured to improve as much as possible, not merely to proselyte them to the Jewish religion, but to the peculiar tenets and practices of my favourite sect, on which alone I firmly believed all the highest and most important posts of honour and emolument in the coming kingdom of the secular Messiah, whom we expected, would be conferred.

In this employment I frequently met with so much success, as to be rewarded by the

thanks of my tutor Gamaliel, and was warmly and strongly recommended by him to the notice and regard of the Sanhedrim.

One instance only of this success is worthy of my remembrance, from the important and unexpected results which it produced, under the direction of a sovereign God, who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will, though, at the time it occurred, I, with all my imagined wisdom and sanctity, was totally unacquainted with the God I professed to worship.

There was a merchant from the Indies whose name was Calanus, who, for the purposes of his commerce, resided a considerable time in the city. He had brought a large quantity of the most valuable diamonds and other precious gems from the oriental mines for sale. The immense riches he appeared to possess, the sumptuous style in which he lived, and the large retinue he maintained, made him appear to me as an important acquisition, if he could be acquired. Alas! with all my boasted pity for the poor idolatrous stranger, who possessed neither property,

rank, or influence, such an one I should have taken very little pains to convert, but here I employed all my heart and energy.

Having formed an acquaintance with him, I became a frequent visitant at his lodgings, where I was well received by him, (notwithstanding he disliked my scrupulous punctilios, especially in refusing to eat with the uncircumcised,) and highly regarded by him as the only person he found capable of informing him respecting many circumstances he was desirous of knowing, that related to our customs, manners, and religion; and in the many conversations I held with him on those subjects, I earnestly laboured to convince him of the unity of God and the divine mission of our Moses; but after repeatedly exhausting all my powers of reasoning and oratory, I still found it impossible to convince him of the falsehood of the idolatrous notions in which he had been educated, though he still continued to treat me with the utmost civility and kindness.

He had brought with him Nirza, his only daughter, in order to gratify her, whom he

tenderly loved, with the sight of those numerous curiosities our country abounded with, and of the grand and sumptuous edifices which adorned the holy city. She was nearly of my own age, sensible and intelligent, and extremely agreeable in person and manners; this amiable virgin was often present during the debates her father and I held on the subject of religion, and silently listened to our conversations with an attentive regard; but as my own attention was so particularly directed to the conversion of her father, I had no suspicion of what was passing in her mind, nor the impressions she had received from my arguments for a considerable time.

One day as I was coming out of my study I was met by a black maid-servant, whom I recollected as one of the domestics I had seen at the house of Calanus, who, with a profound reverence, presented me with the following note, and retired without speaking a word or waiting for an answer:—

“ HOLY RABBI ELEAZAR,

“ Though I have all my past life worshipped the gods of my forefathers, of gold and silver, of wood and stone, yet

you have made it evident to my heart that they cannot save me; you have so plainly proved that your Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is the only true and living God, that I long to know and worship him. But, O thou servant of God, what can thine hand-maid do? The tender parent from whose loins she derived her being, abhors the name of Jehovah; and upon her expressing some doubts this morning to him, concerning the danger of worshipping the idols of our country, was filled with rage, and, with the most bitter curses, threatened, like the ostriches of the wilderness, to forsake his only offspring, and to leave his inheritance to others. Her father is dear to her, but her immortal spirit is more important; therefore she humbly seeketh instruction from thee, and if the request be lawful, holy man of God, she would intreat thee to point out to her a place of refuge, where she may become an hand-maiden to some one of the daughters of thy people, and be more fully taught the law of the God of Israel, under whose wings she cometh to trust.

“Despise not, I beseech thee, the request of thy unworthy hand-maid, but be pleased to direct and assist me, and thy God will reward thee. “NIRZA.”

“My maid, though ignorant of the nature of my letter, yet being faithful to me, will deliver this, and in three days come to thee for an answer.”

On the receipt of this letter, I felt a mingled sentiment of pleasure and concern; I was pleased with the hope of doing good to the soul of this young stranger, but at the same time I could not but entertain a suspicion, lest

her letter should be the effect of some artful design, as I had heard so many relations of the cunning wiles exercised by the daughters of the heathens to delude the sons of Israel, and I was, on this account, fearful of acting on my own judgment; I therefore communicated the matter to my friend Saul, who at first warmly dissuaded me from intermeddling at all in so dangerous and delicate an affair, lest I should tarnish so fair a character for sanctity as I had obtained. However, he wished me to consult our sage and venerable tutor, and to be governed entirely by his wise advice.

When I had related the story to Gamaliel, he replied in his usual cool dispassionate manner, that it did not become any one to pronounce an immediate opinion on a matter of such moment, and which might produce important results; but that he would seriously consider it, and give me his advice on the next day.

In the cool of the next morning he called me to walk with him on the roof of the college, and addressed me to the following purport:—

“ My dear son Eleazar, I have given the most serious and attentive consideration to the very important subject you confided to me, and I am fully persuaded that there does not appear to be any deceit or imposture in the letter of this young stranger, and she appears, in many respects, to be a prize worth our securing to our sect, lest, if neglected by us, she should be deluded by the Sadducees or Herodians, in which case her state would still be doubtful, though she renounced the gross idolatry of her education ; besides, if you do not complete the good work you have begun, the just reward your merit might otherwise expect, would be diminished, and you would also lose that lesser reward which yet is not to be slighted by a wise man—that esteem amongst men which, by the entire success of your proselyting efforts, you would be justly entitled to claim.

“ Yet it is highly improper that a young person of her sex and age, should be placed under the immediate protection of a man of your years, least instead of exalting it, might injure that high reputation for austere sanctity

you now possess, and the enemies of our sect should take occasion to speak reproachfully of us, as if we were men of like passions with others.

I would therefore, counsel you to go immediately with my recommendation to Bethphage, to consult your parents, and commission your mother to provide her a refuge in the house, and under the instructions of some pious matron of our sect; and when she is safely fixed in her situation, it will be necessary for you to refrain from visiting her, from a prudent regard to that reputation for sanctity you have acquired."

Thus directed and sanctioned I went home, and found my parents, on hearing my narration, and the conclusions of the wise and learned Gamaliel, very readily agreed to assist in the affair; and my mother said, that if I could find means to conduct Nirza to their house, she should remain there concealed under her own protection, till the search her enraged father would probably make for her was over, and then she would provide her such a situation as she desired.

On hearing this I returned to the college, and retiring to my study, after a long prayer I wrote a letter to my young proselyte, to have it in readiness to deliver to her servant when she should call for it, to the following effect:—

DAUGHTER OF THE EAST,

Praised be the God of our Fathers, of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, that he hath raised thee up as a second Ruth, the Moabitess, who left her country, and her kindred, and the gods of Moab, for his name's sake.

A safe and secret asylum is provided for thee in the house of my mother, who will consider thee as her child, and tenderly watch over and instruct thee, until she can safely place thee under the care of one of our devout and ancient matrons, who will with readiness employ all her leisure in giving thee instruction in the law of our God.

If therefore thou canst find a way to escape with thy *portable property*, from thy father's house, in the darkness of the evening, and come to the college where I will wait for thee, I will be thy conductor to my mother, after which I will not see thee, lest the daughters of the people, should take an occasion from my visits to reproach thee on my account, for thy reputation as well as thy soul is dear to

ELEAZAR BEN JOSEPH.

On the following evening the maid servant came to my lodgings, when I sent this letter by her to her mistress, who soon after took

the opportunity of her father's absence from home, to come to me after sunset, accompanied by her maid who carried a casket of very valuable jewels, when I conducted them to Bethphage, where I left them to the care of my mother, and returned to my studies.

When I had completed my education I returned to my father's house, where Nirza still remained, my mother to whom she had endeared herself by her amiable conduct being unwilling to part with so agreeable a guest, especially as she had brought with her more than sufficient for her support in gems, and also, because the retired situation of her house afforded her the best asylum from the fury of her father, who enraged at her elopement and the religious cause to which he justly attributed it, vowed if he could discover her retreat, he would sacrifice her to his country gods. My father's house was situated on the brow of an eminence on the left hand of the village, at a considerable distance from the public road, and commanded an extensive and delightful prospect from the front windows; a lovely vale enlivened with many of

the country seats of the opulent inhabitants of Jerusalem lay just before it, beautified with the many windings of the brook Cedron, skirted with meadows clad in luxuriant herbage and white with bleating flocks; beyond, the rising hills which surrounded the holy city just afforded a glimpse of its glittering spires above their summits; behind the house lay our paternal fields enclosed with verdant quicksets of aromatic shrubs, and through the midst of them a gravel walk between two rows of spreading palms led to the impervious coppice which was the boundary of our possessions; then by several easy and graceful turns directed those who followed it to a rustic seat in the thickest part of the wood, where remote from the noise and bustle of the busy world, I delighted often to retire and attend to my devotions and my studies.

On a charming summer morning as I arose before the sun for the purpose, I was surprised on approaching the secluded bower to find early as the hour was, that my fair proselyte was there, she was seated on the turf and her arm resting on the seat, supported her

cheek with her left hand, while she was looking with fixed attention on a book which she held in her right hand, and appeared absorbed in profound meditation.

As in pursuance to the advice of Gamaliel I had hitherto since my return to Bethphage, studiously avoided all particular conversation with her, and never seen her but in the company of my parents, I would now have retired and left her to her own contemplations, but I found that she had perceived me, I therefore drew near enough to see that the book she held was a copy of the prophets, and asked her, which of our holy seers she was reading. She replied, the prophecy of Isaiah, and I have just met with a passage which has surprised and perplexed me, and contains some sacred mystery which my feeble mind cannot comprehend, and I am glad you are come that I may be favoured with your comment upon it. Whom can this be of whom the prophet says, "He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all?"

I answered that some of our learned Rab-

bies had supposed it to be the mournful prophet Jeremiah, who recorded the sorrows of captive Israel in his lamentations, but that others expounded it to refer to Ezekiel who was commanded of God to lie on his side and bear the iniquities of the children of Israel for certain days.

“It does not become me,” said she, “an ignorant proselyte of a few days, to controvert such authorities, but I frankly acknowledge that it struck my mind forcibly that your expected Messiah was intended by the holy man of God in this description, as there is a dignity annexed to the character of the sufferer which seems to me too great to be applied to any ordinary prophet.”

“O beware,” said I earnestly, “my dear Nirza, of delusion, it is quite impòssible that our Messiah can be intended, as he is uniformly pointed out to be a victorious conqueror sitting on the throne of his father David, and rendering all the kingdoms of the earth tributary to the favoured nation of Israel.”

This answer satisfied the mind of my

young disciple, but yet I acknowledge it was not entirely satisfactory to myself, the idea she had started, new as it was to me, puzzled my mind, and occasioned some uneasy thoughts, for I saw plainly that our past history afforded no instance of any person to whom the whole of the description in the context was fully applicable.

However, I concealed my perplexity on this head from the proselyted maid, and turned the conversation to the subject of her own merit in forsaking the house and relinquishing the inheritance of her father, for the sake of the God of Israel, and the great reward she might expect from him on that account.

The human heart readily accepts the increase of praise, and soon believes it, a just tribute to its native worth, and hence every individual of our fallen race possesses by nature a pharisaic heart: the conversion of an heathen to a pharisee, lay within the power of natural principles, not so the conversion of either from nature to grace; a clue was now put into each of our hands, but it did not lead

either the proselyte or the Rabbi one step towards the Christ of God.

However a link in the chain of wondrous providences which have attended me all my life was closely connected (though I was ignorant of the divine purpose) with the conversation.

I had till that instant regarded my young friend in no other point of view than as an immortal being, who had been rescued by my means from a state of heathenish idolatry, and taught to worship the God of Israel; and while I blindly imagined the change which had taken place in her sentiments, had entitled her to the divine favour, I considered myself as the cause of it, and as being on that account ennobled the more, and possessed of a right to expect still higher honours in the coming kingdom of our great Messiah; but while we were now engaged in conversation, I was almost insensibly led to view her as a woman, young, lovely in person, amiable in manners, intelligent in mind, and in want of a protector; and I immediately began to entertain a desire to become the guide and pro-

tector she needed in a strange land, however, I carefully avoided giving the most distant hint of the commencing tenderness I felt for her, either to herself or to my parents, as I was desirous of consulting my tutor, whom I revered as an oracle, and also my friend Saul, to whose judgment I paid almost an equal reverence. I therefore endeavoured to shorten the interview, and after some general conversation conducted her to the house.

On the same day I went to Jerusalem, and meeting Gamaliel and Saul together, I stated my views to them, assuring them that I distrusted my own judgment in an affair wherein the heart was concerned, and therefore was determined to take no step without their concurrence.

The venerable sage, after pausing a considerable time, in silence at length acknowledged, "that he felt some doubts concerning the propriety of a man of my excellent character forming such a connection, with one who was not a Jewess by birth, though he owned that there could be no other reasonable objection to our union."

Saul with his usual warmth replied, “ that much as he revered the opinion of his tutor, he could not consider the objection as of any weight, while he recollected the marriage of Boaz with Ruth the Moabitess, and that of Solomon with the proselyted Egyptian princess, both which were recorded with approbation, though the nations whence they sprang were avowed enemies of Israel, which could not be said of the Indian tribes—and that though he would not, if in his power, attempt to supplant his friend, yet he should have felt himself happy had he been in my place.”

My tutor after thinking over Saul’s argument drawn from such examples, said, “ that he concurred with him, and conceived that if my parents (to whom he advised me immediately to communicate my views) gave their free consent, he did not see but that I had a right to indulge an affection for one he believed so worthy of it as Nirza.”

Thus encouraged I returned home and finding my mother alone, I asked her what were her designs respecting the future residence of her guest.

She replied, "that she was so much delighted with her company, that she could not think of parting with her, but wished me to consider her as a sister, for both my father and herself should ever look on her as a daughter, and as such had agreed to make a provision for her in the event of their decease."

"And what my dear mother," said I, "if I regard her already in a dearer light than a sister; would you or my father object to making her at once your daughter, and the wife of your son?"

"Eleazar," said she, "we have already conversed on the subject, and if she had been born of Abraham, it would have been the object of our warmest wishes, but what would your wise instructor say of Rabbi Eleazar becoming the husband of one descended from uncircumcised ancestors."

"I make this humble applicatiion," replied I, "for your consent, with the concurrence and by the advice of Gamaliel."

"It is enough," said my mother; "your father, as well as I, will be delighted with

the connection, but till the cruel father of Nirza is departed, it may be most prudent in you not to communicate your wishes to her," to which I readily submitted.

Calanus having in vain made the most diligent search he possibly could for his daughter, at length left Judea, and departed for his own country in a violent rage, uttering many most horrid imprecations against the God of Israel and his religion, which he supposed her attachment to, had occasioned her leaving him, and as soon after I was certain of his departure, I made known the state of my heart to my beloved Indian, whose grateful mind was easily impressed with sentiments of the most tender and affectionate regard for one, to whose instructions she considered herself indebted for all her hopes of future happiness.

It is reasonable therefore to suppose, that our mutual felicity was no longer delayed than a due regard to all those forms and ceremonies, which either the law, the comments of our doctors, the oral traditions of the elders, or the customs of the most devout

of our sect, rendered in my view, indispensibly necessary, and from which, even in the nicest punctilio, I would not have deviated on any account whatever; accordingly, after a previous solemn betrothment in the presence of my parents and other relatives, with the exception of a kinsman or two whom I considered as tainted with the Sadducean heresy, and therefore would not invite as witnesses, lest their signatures should contaminate the deed of betrothment, our nuptials were solemnized with much pomp and ceremony just before the commencement of the Pass-over.

As in consequence of my recent marriage I did not remain in Jerusalem during the feast, only went thither daily to join in the public worship of the temple, and immediately returned to Bethphage, I was the less interested in the awful transactions that took place in the condemnation and death of Jesus.

However from the influence of those principles whereby I was governed, I could not refuse the tribute of my cordial approbation

to the pious zeal of our Sanhedrim, in pursuing those vigorous measures which, I doubted not, would totally destroy the imposture, and was only grieved, that the blind delusion, as I supposed it to be, of Joseph and Nicodemus, had prevented complete unanimity in the proceedings of the venerably assembly.

On the night of that day when Jesus was crucified, when I engaged in the worship of the family at Bethphage, I well remember that I addressed the God of our fathers in this impious manner,

“Yes, God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, who hast chosen Jerusalem and the Temple, to put thy name there, thou art righteous—thou hast avenged thyself on thine enemy! We adore thee, O great Jehovah, that thou hast strengthened the holy guardians of thy laws to execute thy vengeance on the daring Nazarene, who durst threaten destruction to our sacred place, and hereby enabled us, by this most holy work, to merit the continuance of thy favour to Israel, to which we had obtained, before this crowning act of holy zeal, a much higher claim than our early an-

cestors, by our remaining free from idolatry ever since our fathers returned from Babylon, and since we zealously punish blasphemers of thy Temple, we beseech thee, O Adonai, to reward the good deeds of thy servants, by sending the Messiah speedily, to crown us with honour, victory, and universal dominion, and to destroy the Roman tyranny from the face of the earth !”

I had scarcely finished uttering this most horrid prayer, when the conversation which I had formerly held with my wife in the bower, concerning the predictions of the prophet Isaiah, suddenly occurred to my remembrance, and I was forcibly struck with the recollection of the character of the illustrious Sufferer described by the prophet, as bearing a nearer resemblance to him, who was now numbered with the transgressors, than it did to any other person recorded in our history ; but I strove indignantly to repel the rising conviction as an horrid suggestion of the tempter, for I saw the consequence of admitting it, would be to forfeit at once all the sanguine hopes I had entertained of filling some

important and exalted station in the future kingdom of the carnal Messiah, whose coming we all expected, as the justly merited reward of my imagined excellence.

The next day when I entered Jerusalem, I met my friend Saul, who with exultation in his countenance, congratulated me on the death of the Deceiver, and on the prudence of our ever watchful elders, in procuring a watch, and setting a seal on his grave, to prevent his disciples from removing the body, and their pretending that he had fulfilled his own prediction of rising from the dead. I was equally pleased with him that these prudent precautions had been taken to prevent the possibility of future delusion, and we fondly flattered ourselves with the hope, that the Nazarene sect was for ever annihilated.

But on the morning of the first day of the week, the tidings reached Bethphage that the body was gone, and that the Roman soldiers had slept on their post during its removal. Ureasonable as this story was, so strong were my prejudices, that I readily credited it, and zealously propagated it among my ac-

quaintance, though I could not satisfactorily account for the existence of those extraordinary prodigies that I had witnessed in the darkness and earthquake that attended his death, and the second more violent shock that rent the rocks and opened the graves on the morning that the body was missing from the tomb.

The passing rumours that were circulated in the city during the several following weeks of his having been seen in different places by a few of his own followers, I regarded as the falsehoods of base wretches, in order to shield themselves from the imputation of imposture; and when at last it was asserted, though with a degree of privacy, that he was ascended to heaven, I considered it the very last effort of an expiring faction, who being unable to produce him on earth, had framed this incredible story.

An heart more completely filled, both with vain ideas of its own virtues and excellencies, and raging enmity and malice against the very name of Jesus than mine, never possessed a human creature, and so far from my

pride and hatred abating in consequence of cool reflection, they seemed daily to gain fresh accessions of strength, but on the memorable morning of the Feast of Pentecost, after offering up a long prayer, in which I did not fail to remind the Most High of my own goodness, and especially of the high claim I had to his peculiar favour on account of my zeal against the impious Nazarene, though I leavened it with an hypocritical compliment to his assistance, whereby I had attained to such heights of piety and virtue, I left my house, filled with self-complacency, and proceeded to the city, in order to attend the solemn worship of the Temple, when I was surprised to behold an immense multitude, both of my own countrymen, and of the strangers, who, from different countries resorted to the feast, assembled in the spacious area before the exchange, and surrounding about a dozen plainly attired men, appearing as fishers or bargemen, who with the greatest earnestness, were conversing with those around them in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, Arabic, and several other languages,

though the men all discovered themselves by their broad country tone and accent to be Galileans. On drawing nearer and listening to their conversation, while I admired the facility with which they altered the languages, in which they were conversing to others, as they saw the natives of different countries attending to their discourse, and while I was conscious that they could not have had any opportunities of acquiring those tongues by any human means of instruction within their reach, I instantly attributed the miracle to the same cause to which we had before ascribed those wrought by Jesus Christ, the influence of Beelzebub the prince of the devils, and I was the more confirmed in this opinion when I found that they were all asserting that Jesus was the Christ, that he was risen from the dead, and that they had seen him ascend into heaven.

The spectators seemed very differently affected by this strange and unprecedented event—some were filled with surprise and exclaimed, What can be the meaning of this wonder? how is it that men apparently un-

lettered can thus speak in so many different dialects? while others mocking and ridiculing the speakers, for want of better arguments wherewith to confute them, foolishly asserted that what they saw and heard was only the effect of drunkenness.

I should instantly, from the first impulse of my feelings, have addressed the multitude to caution them against being deluded by a lying wonder; but seeing one of the Galileans, a rough hardy-looking man, ascend the steps of the Exchange, and beckon to the people to bespeak their attention, I determined to give him no interruption till he had concluded his discourse, and then, by my superior abilities, to confute him before the multitude.

When Peter (for he it was) had obtained with difficulty, a degree of silence, with an undaunted air, stretching out his right hand, he began to address himself to his countrymen, and in particular to the inhabitants of the city, observing the absurdity of their supposition that at so early an hour of the day, himself or his companions should have had opportunity to become intoxicated with wine,

and if so, that which overpowers the intellects of men could never have improved theirs, and communicated to them in an instant, the knowledge of languages they had never learnt.

He then proposed, in plain and simple expressions, a solution of the case from the predictions of the prophet Joel ; and glancing through their own acknowledged sacred books, he adduced a variety of proofs that Jesus was the Messiah so long expected ; and having charged his murder home to their consciences, explained the design of his sufferings, produced the evidences of his resurrection, and called them to repentance, on the ground of his exaltation, to bestow forgiveness even on his murderers.

During this discourse, which I found myself unable to resist or interrupt, I listened, as did the greater part of the surrounding multitude, with profound attention, and in spite of my prejudices, I felt myself agitated with surprising sensations ; the true character of the God of Israel, of which I now saw I had till this time been totally ignorant, rose

at once before my view ; the amazing extent and spotless purity of the divine law, and the enormity of my guilt, in presenting a proud heart and a life of merely external and imperfect performances, in answer to its demands, struck me with horror at myself, and I stood astonished at the divine forbearance in sparing so long a guilty rebel ; and while I perceived in the prophecies and sacrifices which I had so long been constantly conversant with, (though such was the blindness of my heart that I had never discovered it till now) that divinity of character and intenseness of sufferings were evidently pointed out as the distinguishing marks of the Messiah ; and recollected the circumstances before-mentioned, when this light had shone on the darkness of my heart, but the darkness comprehended it not. I also beheld, in the object of my former abhorrence and contempt, the crucified Nazarine, every predicted characteristic of the long-expected Redeemer of Israel. I regarded myself as a monster of enmity and incredulity ; but in his obedience and sacrifice I saw the richest encouragement for the vilest of sinners

to approach to the throne of God, depending on him as the end of the law for righteousness. The glory of his life and work rushed on my soul with irresistible energy, and the tears of penitential gratitude bedewed my cheeks.

No longer could I retain my fancied superiority over Sadducees and Publicans; I saw myself on a level with the worst of those characters on whom I had been so long accustomed to look down with hatred and contempt, and while I felt a new and ardent sentiment of fraternal affection arise in my soul to all those who, like me, had been led to see that they could derive hope towards God from no other source than the atonement made to his injured justice by the crucified Redeemer; I regarded with the feelings of benevolent pity the most adverse characters.

Before Peter had concluded his address, I was too much absorbed in attention to be capable of noticing any of the objects around me; but soon after he had ceased speaking, I lifted up my eyes, and began to regard the effect produced by his words on the multitude,

who in general appeared to be struck with new amazement; on many countenances were visibly painted the tokens of deep compunction and distress, and on others, those of surprising joy and grateful adoration.

Close by my side, though I had not observed him before, I saw standing Rabbi Joachim Ben Melchi, a relation of my father, but one who had professed the doctrine of the Sadducees, on which account a mutual enmity had long subsisted between us. On perceiving me, he instantly held out his hand towards me, crying out, "O my dear kinsman Eleazar, we have all been blind to the sense of those mysterious truths which the prophets taught; but none have erred so deeply as we have, who denied the resurrection; but now I see and know that Jesus is the Christ, that he is risen from the dead, yea, and in him alone sinners have life eternal."

"Dear Joachim," I replied with tears, "my kinsman, my brother, my friend, how did our blind zeal render us all inveterate enemies to each other; but no wonder, since

we were all enemies to the God of Israel, and despisers of his Son, the great Messiah; but since we have now beheld his glory, and found a sure foundation of hope in the righteousness of him whom we rejected, let our hearts be for ever one, and let us joyfully unite in professing the glorious truth concerning Jesus the Redeemer, whatever earthly interest or gratification we may be exposed to the loss of by that profession." While we were thus speaking, Jonathan the publican drew near, and thus accosted us;—

“ I should not, a few hours since, have ventured to intrude into the company of either of you, as I was no stranger to the contempt in which men of my description were held by both Pharisees and Sadducees, but I have heard a part of your conversation, and rejoice to find thereby that you, like myself, have felt that divine power which has accompanied the word spoken by the disciple of Jesus, and therefore I can now call you, in the tenderest affection, my dear brethren in that precious Saviour. O! my friends, what Almighty energy is there in that blood that has cemented

such malicious enemies as we lately were in eternal friendship: but let us hasten to the man of God, and enquire for directions how we may live to glorify him who was cut off from the land of the living, that such sinners as we are might be written among the living in Jerusalem."

I said nothing, but caught his hand with the pressure of affection, and we all ran eagerly towards the disciples, and joined the exclamation of multitudes affected in the same manner with ourselves, saying to Peter and his companions, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" He replied, with an energetic tone, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, as a symbol of the remission of all your transgressions, and you shall participate with us in the free gift of the sacred Spirit, who is this day descended upon us, through the intercession of Jesus the Christ, at the right hand of God the Father; for the promise of God to Abraham is now fulfilled to you and to your children; yea, and enlarged to all who are afar off, even to all who are called to

repentance on the foundation of these glad tidings.”

Hereunto we joyfully assented, and with three thousand of our fellows, who, like us, gladly received the word, were baptized with water, which Peter and the other apostles poured on us, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*

Those who remained in their state of ignorance and prejudice had now removed themselves to a considerable distance in disdain, and were ridiculing us while we were praying for them; while all the converted, as soon as they had left us together, surrounded the apostles, and listened with delight to their further instructions in the doctrine of the crucified Redeemer.

After several happy hours spent in conversation on the wonders of grace, and in earnest supplications and praises to the Saviour, we began to separate, in order to return to our respective avocations, having

* See Acts i. 5, compared with Acts ii. 16, 17, for the true meaning of the word baptize in Scripture.

been previously directed by the apostles to meet again at a certain hour the next day.

It is impossible for me to attempt a description of the complicated feelings which agitated my heart as I turned towards the gate which led towards Bethphage, though the recollection warms my inmost soul at the present moment—transporting joy, deep self-abhorrence, grateful affection to the Saviour, mingled with tender pity and anxious solicitude on account of my dearest connexions, alternately overwhelmed my mind, and as I slowly proceeded along the road, I began to deliberate with myself what method I should pursue in communicating the glad tidings of salvation to my wife and parents; and after most earnestly beseeching the Saviour for direction and success, I determined, if I could procure their attention, simply to relate the facts which had occurred that day, and then refer to that prophecy of Esaias which Nirza had formerly applied to the Messiah, as both a proof and illustration of them.

When I entered the door, my beloved received me with every token of affectionate

tenderness, and remarked the extraordinary cheerfulness of my countenance with a smile, saying, "The habitual serenity of your appearance, my dear Eleazar, daily discovers your enjoyment of that inward peace which must ever be the reward of piety so exemplary as yours; but you look now, if I may judge by the joy that beams from your eyes, as if you came the bearer of some peculiarly joyful news."

"Yes," replied I, "my best beloved, my dearer self, I am indeed the happy messenger of glad tidings to you—glad tidings of great joy to all people—tidings from heaven, for the God of Abraham hath visited and redeemed his people—the long-expected hope of Israel has at length appeared—the great Messiah is come, and hath ascended to the throne of his father David; of the increase of his government and power there shall be no end, for unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

"These are indeed," said my Nirza, "joy-

ful tidings to Israel. O tell us all the particulars of his wonderful appearance, and how he is made known to us. What is the form in which he appears? Has he descended visibly from heaven, attended by angels, to the holy temple, to reward the piety and zeal of our priests and rulers, in executing his righteous vengeance on the blasphemous Nazarine?"

"Ah, my dearest spouse," returned I, "it is not at all surprising to me that you should form such a conclusion from my words, for a few hours ago I should have viewed such intelligence, had I received it, in the same light with you; but permit me earnestly to intreat, for a few short moments, your silent attention, and that of my revered parents, to the wondrous facts I have to acquaint you with; and though, perhaps, some of them may not only surprise but offend you, yet I beseech you to permit me to finish my relation before you reply.

My Nirza well remembers the conversation we held in the bower a considerable time before our union, respecting the prophecies

of Isaiah, and her own supposition, which I controverted at the time, of their reference to the Messiah. Ah, surely! that thought was inspired by the same Spirit who dictated the words of the prophecy to the holy seer; but blinded by my carnal notions of the great Messiah's reign, and influenced by a self-righteous and worldly spirit, I was then totally incapable of discerning its truth, though I now honestly confess, that at some times, as I remember well, it would recur to my mind with considerable force, and afford me a momentary pang of suspicion, lest I might possibly be mistaken; but now I behold the truth and glory of those and many other prophecies, which then were to me totally obscure. No, my dear friends, the Messiah did not come to reward the piety of any in Jerusalem, for, alas! truth was fallen in our streets, and equity could not enter; the proud were accounted happy, and he who departed from evil made himself a prey; he came to be despised and rejected of men, to be wounded for our transgressions, to be bruised for our iniquities; to be cut off, but

not for himself; to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to make reconciliation for iniquity: he was unknown to Israel, though pointed out by a thousand infallible marks in the sacred writings of Moses and the prophets, till on this day he has sent down the promised Spirit from on high: these eyes have seen the mighty wonders wrought by his name; and these ears have heard the unlearned men, who are inspired by him, declare the glories of Immanuel, in all the various languages spoken by the proselytes who were at the feast. Yes, and convinced by his Almighty power, I declare unto you, that Jesus, the crucified Nazarine, is the Son of God—the long-desired and expected king of Israel!”

I paused—astonishment had hitherto held them silent, but now my father, with indignation flashing from his eyes, exclaimed aloud, “ God of our Fathers! is it possible? Can this be the son in whom I prided myself so much? Can this be he whom all Jerusalem admired as a prodigy of wisdom and

piety at so early an age? Is he indeed become so suddenly the dupe of infatuation—the disciple of that detestable Impostor whose influence even on the mob ceased with his life; or has some demon of the pit assumed his form to distract me? Hence!” added he, with vehemence, “vile wretch, I tear thee for ever from my heart, and command thee from my house, which shall no longer afford a shelter to a rebel to his country and an apostate to his God; prepare instantly, therefore, to leave thy paternal abode, which thy presence pollutes, and herd with those infatuated wretches, who, like thee, adore a deceiver. Instead of thee, Nirza, whose husband thou art unworthy to be styled any longer, shall possess our sole regard, and inherit the patrimony thou hast so justly forfeited. Fly instantly, or I will repair to the Sanhedrim and deliver thee up to their righteous vengeance!”

“Ah, my dear father,” said I, “your threatenings have no effect to intimidate a soul that feels the support which a Saviour’s grace affords to his followers; but I weep for

you who are still deluded, as I was till this day, by that blind conceit which influences you to reject the Christ of God. I will leave this loved abode; I will not any longer offend your sight; but never will I cease, while my life remains, to pray for you, that you may know and taste the salvation of God, and that your sins may be blotted out through the virtue of that precious blood which was shed for many for the remission of sins.

“But O my dearest Nirza, (seeing her weep) what think you of Christ? Can it be possible that you and my dear mother remain in that state of blindness in which I was so long held concerning those truths which the prophets have told us?”

My mother did not reply, but cast on me a look of such horror and contempt that discovered every spark of maternal tenderness to be extinguished in her bosom. But my beloved, my amiable spouse, after a pause, during which her changing countenance displayed inward emotion, at length brake silence, and addressing my father, said, “Suffer me, my dearest parent, to represent

to you, that though I am equally struck with surprise and terror as yourself, at the strange delusion that has infatuated my Eleazar, yet I can never forget him as the pious youth whose divine eloquence first attracted my attention, and drew me from the vain worship of the idols of the heathens, and led me to adore the God of Israel. Time, and your wise reasoning will, I doubt not, shortly convince him of the error he has embraced, and restore him to me as the guide of my youth.

“O, my dear parents, be not hasty in adopting violent measures to reclaim a once-loved wanderer ; do not, I entreat, I conjure you, banish from the abode of such loved and honoured parents the dear, though misguided man to whom, with your own approbation, I have vowed eternal affection, and from whom I will never be separated but by death.”

“Then,” returned my inflexible father, raising his voice to a tremendous pitch, “you may go with him ; for, by the God of our father Abraham, he shall not remain another hour in this house !”

As I saw it utterly useless to attempt over-

coming the stubborn temper of my relentless father, I began to pack up some change of raiment for myself and my wife, and taking what little money I possessed, (for Nirza's cabinet of jewels was not offered us, nor did either of us think of demanding it,) I prepared to leave the place of my nativity, and my Nirza in silence followed me to the door, when, kneeling down on the threshold, with streaming eyes and elevated hands, I cried, "Jesus, Saviour, now ascended to the throne of thy glory, will thou, who didst on the cross implore forgiveness for thy murderers, intercede also for those dear deluded parents whom I leave, and give them to partake of thy salvation." Then rising slowly, I took my bundle of clothes on one arm, and silently giving the other to Nirza, we walked towards the valley.

Some time had elapsed before either of us were capable of speaking, at length, in a voice interrupted by sobs and tears, I thus began;—

"My heart, amiable woman, feels, tenderly feels this most evident proof of your sincere affection for your husband; and I

rejoice in the possession of an heart like yours more than I should in the empire of a world; but far greater would be my delight could I hear you acknowledge the full conviction of your soul that, till this happy day, I, with all my knowledge, was as blind to the true glory of the God of my fathers, as you were while worshipping images in your native land. Yes, my beloved, we have all been awfully ignorant of the intention of the Mosaic institutions, which were calculated to instruct us in the knowledge of a most abasing truth, that amid all our imagined sanctity, we were polluted, guilty, and condemned criminals, and that it is only in the perfect righteousness of the holy Lamb of God, who was sacrificed on the cross, that we can be justified in his sight."

"My dearest husband," she replied, "I certainly love you dearer than my life, but I cannot avoid the suspicion, that your present, instead of your former views are delusive. Can you have forgotten the wise answers you gave to my mistaken thoughts on the prophecies, which set my heart at rest? and are you

so suddenly moved from your former steadfastness? O think again; is it possible that all your wise and good men should be totally deceived, and a few poor illiterate Galileans be wiser than all the elders and priests?"

"Much as I regret," said I, "my blind obstinacy, it is no surprise to me that the wisest men of Israel were deluded, while I remember that the pride of wisdom had made me a fool, and the vain imagination of my own righteousness concealed the righteousness of God from my view; but let me intreat my beloved wife to search the writings of the prophets again, with an unbiassed attention, and compare them with the wonders that are come to pass in these days, and may the Saviour himself enlighten you, and give you to behold his glory; then will my heart feel a more transporting rapture than on that happy day which first united us to each other in lasting bonds."

"But, my Eleazar," rejoined she, "on what ground can I expect the God of Israel to grant me his favour, if my relinquishing

my father's house and affluence for his sake has merited nothing of him?"

"On his account, my Nirza, who alone is capable of meriting any thing of his Father, the Son of God, who, by his obedience unto death, hath magnified the law, and made it honourable."

"I cannot understand," she returned hastily, "how the worth of another can be of any advantage to us; your words to me appear destitute of meaning; let me therefore, at least for the present, intreat you to cease from a subject I am incapable of conversing on, and consider where, under our destitute circumstances, we are to take up our abode for the night."

"I have a dear friend and brother," said I, "in the Sheep Market, near the Pool, from whom I am confident we shall meet with a kind and welcome reception, for the sake of that Saviour who, while on earth, had not where to lay his head."

I led her to the house of Joachim, our cousin, and knocked at the gate; Joachim him-

self coming to open it, she started at the sight of him, and turning aside, whispered me, "Eleazar, is not this the Sadducee, against whose pernicious tenets you have warned me?"

"He was so, my love," returned I softly, "but we are now one in Christ Jesus, and here you will see another proof of Messiah's wondrous power."

"Brother Joachim," said I, "my mistaken parent has this evening banished me from his house, in consequence of my having professed my faith in the Redeemer of Israel, and though my dear spouse has not yet seen the glory of the Messiah, she has accompanied her exiled husband from the influence of her affectionate tenderness; and we are now come to seek an asylum in your habitation: will you receive the strangers as our father Abraham received the unknown angels of old?"

"Yes, my dear brother Eleazar," replied he, "to my house and to my heart, with the sincerest delight; and it rejoices my soul that the blessed Redeemer has so soon afforded me an opportunity of manifesting my love to

his name, which has united us in one ; and it encourages me to hope that he will be merciful to your beloved wife, and shew her his glory. Come in, my dearest friends, and I will introduce you to my Joanna, who has this evening received the word of Christ with joy, and we have been worshipping him together ; but what will afford you, Eleazar, greater pleasure, you will presently see Thomas, one of the apostles of Jesus, who has promised to sup with me to-night."

We entered, and after some little conversation, Thomas the apostle came in, saying, with the smile of unfeigned benevolence on his countenance, " Peace be unto you, in the name of Jesus the Prince of Peace."

" Holy disciple of our risen Lord," said my kinsman, " I recommend to you, this my dear relative and my brother in Christ, who has been already dignified with conformity to his Saviour in becoming a willing sufferer for the truth, being expelled from his father's house for professing his faith in the Redeemer, and who is come with his wife to seek an asylum with me."

“ I remember well,” said Thomas, “ that Jesus said unto us long ago, “ there is no man that hath left father, or mother, or wife, or children, or houses, or lands, for my sake and the gospel, but shall receive an hundred fold in this life with persecutions, and in the world to come everlasting life. But why, Joachim, didst thou call me holy? was it to bring to my remembrance my unbelief, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to me, an ungrateful sinner? which I will now relate for your instruction, and especially on thy account, my daughter (to Nirza) that thou who as yet knowest him not, mayest be convinced, as I was, and believe on the Son of God.”

We were all struck with astonishment at this address; but my wife especially was overcome with surprise to find the inspired apostle acquainted with her state, and we all listened to him with profound attention, while he thus proceeded :

“ Though our dear Lord Jesus had called me to be with him, though I had heard him speak as never man spake, and had been

sent forth by him to preach his gospel, to cast out devils, and to do many wonderful works ; yet I confess with shame my ignorance and blindness, in not understanding the many clear predictions which he gave us concerning his sufferings, death, and resurrection ; and that when his enemies had nailed him to the cross, my soul was overwhelmed with dismal despairing apprehensions. I began to think that I had been deceived by him, and that all my hopes of happiness were gone for ever ; for I was certain that if Jesus was not the Messiah, it was absolutely impossible that any one should arise who could, by plainer, by more evident marks, prove himself to be so, and therefore the expectation of the Fathers, with all the glorious consequences connected with it, was vain. I even began to doubt the divine mission of Moses ; nay, to such a height of infidelity was I arrived, that I could not firmly believe the existence of the God of Israel.

“ Ah, who would envy the happiness of an infidel ? The soul wants a support suited to its own nature, and can find it only in the in-

finite God : but my only prop was gone ; I felt as falling into a bottomless abyss of endless confusion and perplexity ; inconceivable misery took possession of every power of my soul, and I could not possibly conceive any thing in the circle of universal existence from whence I could attain even an alleviation of the excruciating tortures of my mind.

“ Unfit for any of the enjoyments of society, and abhorring my very being, I avoided the company of all mankind ; I sought out the most gloomy and sequestered walks ; I wished to obtain an asylum in some horrid cavern, inhabited only by toads and serpents, whose hissing and croaking, accompanied with the howling of the tempests, suited my sensations of woe. Thus miserable, I wandered about in solitude during the two last days of the week, and the whole glorious day of the Saviour’s resurrection.

“ On the morning following I arose from my sleepless couch, if possible, more deeply wounded with despair than ever ; nothing but a bare surmise that there might exist an avenging deity able to inflict severer torments

than I now writhed under, restrained my guilty hand from piercing my more guilty heart. I crept slowly out at the nearest gate of the city, and bent my course towards Mount Olivet, when unexpectedly James Lebbeus and Simon Zelotes appeared in sight, and what amazed me was to see the smile of celestial joy in their countenances, while my pale and haggard looks plainly discovered the raging fire within. Averse to all society, I would have shunned their approach, but they ran towards me with the eagerness of friendship, telling me in hasty accents that the Lord was risen from the dead ; that they had seen him, and that, with his accustomed affection, he had spoken peace to them.

“ The mind, influenced by prejudice, has no inclination coolly and impartially to examine evidence ; it receives or rejects a proposition hastily, just as it first impresses the imagination ; judgment and reason were never truly engaged on the side of incredulity. I heard their assertion, but it appeared so absurd and incredible, that my wicked heart rose against them with indignation for attempting

to impose on me so barefaced a falsehood, and I exclaimed vehemently, 'Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails which fastened him to the cross, and am made sensible of their reality, not only by sight but feeling, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.' Then hastily turning from them, I retired, leaving them wrapt in wonder and pity, and hid myself in the thickest part of the olive grove, where I bemoaned my remediless distress.

“ During the whole of that week, I continued in the same sceptical and disconsolate state of mind, bewailing as dead, him in whom my brethren were rejoicing as risen, till on the return of the first day of the week the tender-hearted John, in whose heart the compassionate disposition of his Lord dwelt, sought me out in my retreat, and by the most affectionate and persevering intreaties at last prevailed on me, though with much difficulty, to accompany him to the house where the other disciples of Jesus were already gathered together in an upper room, praying, having shut the doors for fear of the

Jews, when suddenly, without any previous noise, or the opening of either of the doors, the Lord Jesus stood up in the midst, and said, 'Peace be unto you.'

"I was instantly struck with astonishment, terror, and remorse, and I dreaded to look upon him lest he should pronounce the direful sentence my unbelief deserved; when turning his benign countenance towards me with a smile, in which heaven appeared to open, and in a voice tuned to more than celestial sweetness, he said, 'Thomas, reach hither thy finger and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing.'

"While the compassionate Saviour thus addressed me, I ventured, though trembling, to look up to him, and saw at once all the glories of divinity shining in his face, and overpowered with love and wonder at his condescending grace, I fell down at his feet, and shouted in an extacy, My Lord and my God!

"'Thomas,' said the Lord Jesus, 'because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed, and

thou feelest the blessings which flow to sinners from my cross ; but more peculiarly blessed are they who, having not seen, have yet believed the report of my resurrection, and multitudes shall partake of that blessing when I have endowed thee and thy fellow disciples with my Holy Spirit, and sent you to spread the tidings through the world.'

“ Ah, my friends ! you who have this day believed the gospel through the preaching of my dearly beloved brother Peter, now know by experience the commencement of that blessing, and may the omnipotent Saviour, thou daughter of the east, soon give thee to believe and taste it also.”

“ I cannot but acknowledge,” replied my wife, “ that your testimony seems the most unsuspected of any I have heard ; but there is a weighty, and to me, as it at present appears, a sufficient reason for my hesitating to give it my full assent ; the holy guardians of Jehovah’s laws, who must be best qualified of all men to judge betwixt truth and error, have unanimously concurred in condemning and executing Jesus as a base

impostor, and even this dear spouse of mine, who, by his pious conversation, drew me from the worship of idols to serve the God of Israel, till this day had cautioned me above all things, to beware of the Nazarene delusion, and I cannot think it possible that your God would conceal from his most diligent and righteous servants a truth of so much importance as the knowledge of him when he appeared, whose coming had for many ages been the object of their most ardent expectation, and the most constant and earnest petition in their prayers.”

“Dear stranger,” returned the affectionate disciple, “the God of Israel cannot justly be charged with the concealment of those truths from his people which he has presented to their view in the relation he has given them, and the institutions he has ordained for their constant observation—the light of divine truth shone around them, but the pride of wisdom blinded their eyes, and the sublimest discoveries of revelation appeared to them as foolishness, while their pretended sanctity, for it was no more than pretence, rendered

them averse to the righteousness of the Holy One.

“ It is true they entertained expectations of the coming of a Messiah, but the object of those expectations was not the character whose advent the prophets had predicted, but one who should be solely subservient to the gratification of their ambitious, sensual, and worldly desires.

“ Moreover, my dear daughter, though you do not now prostrate yourself before gods of gold and silver, of wood and stone, as your fathers did, yet while you remain ignorant of the glory of Jesus the Christ, you are a worshipper of those destructive idols, self, and the world, and are still an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, a stranger to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world ; but to you is the word of this salvation sent, believe, therefore, on Jesus the Christ, and you shall be saved.”

As my wife made no reply, the conversation became more general, though still perfumed with the savour of the Saviour's name ;

and afterwards we sang an hymn ; the disciple prayed affectionately for us, and we separated, and retired to rest.

On several of the following days, at every opportunity which occurred, without neglecting the necessary business of his calling, my friend Joachim accompanied me (and when her domestic avocations permitted, his wife also) to the meetings of the saints which were daily held, either in the temple, or from house to house, where we received much instruction and consolation, by means of the apostles' discourses, and enjoyed much delightful communion with our God, while joining in the prayers and praises of the church ; and on a morning I shall ever recollect with gratitude to my Redeemer, by the most tender persuasions, Joanna, though with some difficulty, prevailed on my spouse to accompany her to the temple a little before the hour of prayer, and as they entered by the gate called Beautiful, they noticed a poor cripple, who being incapable of walking, was daily carried thither by his friends, and laid in the porch to ask alms of those who came

to the temple for the purpose of divine worship; my Nirza, whose heart was ever susceptible of the softest sentiments of compassion, dropped a tear at the reflection that our present impoverished and dependent situation did not permit her to give that liberal relief which she would gladly have afforded him had she been in her former state of affluence; however, she gave him more than a tear, the sum was trifling, but it was all she had about her, and hearing that he had been totally helpless from his birth, she heaved a sigh, and turning her moistened eye to Joanna, she said, "What an happiness would it be for this miserable object, if Elias, the prophet, who recovered the Syrian from his leprosy, were now on earth; surely, if applied to, he would have restored his withered limbs in the name of the God of Israel."

"I suppose," returned Joanna, "if you had seen such a wonder performed by Elias you would not have hesitated a moment to acknowledge him a prophet commissioned by Jehovah."

"No," replied my wife eagerly, "nor do I

think that the least doubt of his divine mission could have been entertained by any one who had been indulged with the happiness of being an eye-witness to the performance of a work so evidently divine."

"Attend then, my dear friend," said Joanna, to what you will probably soon behold, for I see at a little distance two of the holy apostles of Jesus who are coming this way, and who, I perceive, already appear to view him with a compassionate regard."

While she spake, Peter and John approached the gate to enter the temple, and the cripple began his usual tale of woe, earnestly intreating, if but the smallest alms, from their generosity.

Peter, stedfastly regarding the miserable being, said to him, "Look on us;" and while, from such an address, he began to entertain the hope of receiving somewhat from them, the disciple instantly dashed his expectations by adding, with a solemn air, "Silver and gold have I none;" then paused, seeing his disappointment, but presently said, "Such as I have give I thee;" then, raising

his voice to a degree of loudness sufficient to attract the attention of the surrounding spectators, he continued, "In the name of Jesus the Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

Instantaneously the miraculous power of the spirit of Christ, which was communicated to the apostles on the day of Pentecost, was manifested in all its glory; swifter than lightning it pervaded every fibre of the cripple's emaciated frame; the relaxed nerves were braced anew, the rigid joints found their flexibility and use, the enfeebled limbs swelled with vigour, the flush of health glowed on his cheek, his weak and decrepid ankle-bones received strength, and while Peter kindly took him by the right hand to assist him in rising, he leaped up, he stood, he walked, he sprang forward like an hart, and followed them into the temple, walking and leaping, and praising God.

Struck with the sight of this amazing miracle, the astonished spectators crowded around the subject of it, who held Peter and John by the hand, and pointed them out to the people as the instruments of his cure.

Joanna, fixing her eyes on Nirza, saw her stand like a statue, appearing petrified with surprise, and accosted her thus: "My dear friend, was the mission of Elias made evident by his miracles, and is the power of the divine Jesus less manifest in the cure his name alone has effected?" My wife could not speak, but the tears which trickled down her face discovered her sensations. Joanna then taking her by the hand led her towards the apostles, as she perceived Peter was beginning to address the people.

He began by disclaiming all pretensions to the honour of the miracle, asserting, that neither the power or holiness of himself or John had contributed towards it, but that the God of their fathers, whom they professed to worship, and to whose honour the edifice wherein they were assembled had been erected, had herein displayed the glory of his son Jesus Christ, who had, at their instigation, been basely murdered; compassionating their ignorance, he referred them to Moses and the prophets, whose divine mission they acknowledged, for proofs of the character of

the Divine Sufferer ; asserted his resurrection ; proved it from the glorious effect of his almighty power before their eyes, and concluded with the emphatic and inviting declaration, “ Unto you first, God having raised up his son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning every one of you from his iniquities.”

Just as he had ceased speaking, I looked that way, and seeing Joanna and my Nirza in the crowd, I made haste towards them, and as I approached, “ O, my dear husband,” said my beloved, “ I know now that Jesus is the Christ, but such has been my horrid opposition to the truth, that I dare not, cannot, must not, say my Saviour.”

The unexpected confession of my wife struck me at first with such surprising delight, that I was for some time incapable of speaking, but as soon as I recovered the use of my faculties, lifting up mine eyes to heaven, I cried, “ Exalted Redeemer of Israel, thou hast now doubly saved me, in revealing thy glory to the wife of my bosom ! What can I, what shall I render to thee for all thy benefits ? but rejoice that thou hast rendered

me still more thy debtor." Then pausing, I turned to her, saying, "Has not our Jesus already saved thee, my love, from that blind pride of imagined righteousness that so lately had led me, as well as thee, to reject the crucified one, and why then hesitate to rejoice in him as thy Saviour, who has given thee such a proof of his saving power, which has filled my heart with a purer, sweeter joy, than that which I felt on our chaste nuptial morn."

"O, my dearest friend," she replied, "I am astonished beyond measure when I reflect on the wonders of divine Providence, that, while totally ignorant of the designs of heaven, and filled with enmity against the holy one, I was influenced by my affection for thee, my Eleazar, to leave with thee the house of thy parents; surely it was of God, since, by that means, I have now witnessed such a glorious proof that Jesus is mighty to save. O that he may save me from my worst enemy, myself; and though my guilt appears horrid beyond all comparison, yet will I look to him alone to reconcile me to God, and if I perish, I perish!"

“When the Lord Jesus was on earth,” returned I, none ever died in his presence, and sure I am that none shall ever perish who look to him for salvation now he is ascended to the throne of his glory.”

While we were thus engaged in conversation, we were suddenly interrupted by a violent noise and confusion among the people, and presently arrived some of the priests, with a band of the Sadducees, commanded by the captain of the temple, who laid hold of the apostles, and conveyed them to prison, where they were kept in custody till the next day.

On this we retired to the house of Joachim, accompanied by several of the brethren, where we spent the remainder of the day in prayer and praise.

The following day Joachim attended the trial of the apostles, in the hall of the Sanhedrim, and on his return gave us an account of their courage and meekness, and informed us that they were discharged from their confinement, and that they were gone to the house of Lebbeus, where the disciples frequently assembled; on which we all followed him

thither, and after prayer, thanksgiving, and a signal communication of grace and fortitude from the Holy Spirit to all present, James arose, and began to address the church to the following import:—

“Brethren, beloved in Christ Jesus, you know that our dear Lord gave us many warnings while he was yet with us, concerning the things which should shortly come to pass; and especially that, after his resurrection, the temporal kingdom of our fathers should be totally destroyed, to make way for his spiritual and eternal kingdom, and that, as Israel, after the flesh, had rejected him, saying in their hearts, we will not have this man to reign over us, the kingdom of God should be taken from them, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof, even to the holy nation which should be gathered to him, by his gospel, from among the Gentiles. Our inheritance in this land of Canaan, which God in ancient ages gave to the seed of Israel, as a type of the incorruptible and undefiled inheritance of the saints in light, can therefore no longer be considered by us

as an everlasting possession, nor are we any longer prohibited from alienating our part therein; but it rather becomes us, as the followers of him who left the world of glory to accomplish our salvation, to sell our lands before they are trodden down by the Gentiles, as our Lord has predicted, and with the produce of them to supply the wants of the aged and infirm amongst us, and especially those of our brethren and sisters whose undaunted profession of the name of Jesus had deprived them of the means of their temporal support."

Lebbeus then added, "Brethren, we are not our own, we are the property of him who hath redeemed us by his most precious blood; nor do we possess any thing but what belongs to him. Let us, therefore, inspired by gratitude, offer him his own, by parting with our possessions in this world, and presenting the produce of them to the Apostles and Elders, that they may distribute it among our poor brethren, (especially to those who have suffered the loss of all things in consequence of

openly avowing their attachment to the Redeemer) according to their need.

“ The religion of the first believers did not lie in word or profession only ; it was a living active principle that constantly brought forth abundant fruits ; and such was the irresistible influence of divine truth on their minds, that it only needed to be displayed in order to produce instant obedience ; this was now evidenced in the conduct of many who were possessors of lands and houses, and who directly leaving the assembly, went among their neighbours and acquaintances in quest of purchasers, and on disposing of their little patrimony, deposited the money they received in the hands of the Apostles, for the supply of the poor.

“ Among these amiable children of benevolence was one very prominent and remarkable character, who was accounted worthy of particular notice in the narration which the inspired Evangelist Luke has left of the Acts of the Apostles ; Joses, a Levite of Cyprus, who had been surnamed Barnabas, the son

of Consolation, on account of the peculiar gift he had received from him who is the consolation of Israel, of administering the comforts of the gospel to the wounded conscience of the burdened desponding sinner.

“This man possessed a paternal inheritance which, besides supplying him from its produce with all the comforts and conveniences of life, was peculiarly endeared to him by several affecting circumstances ; there, in a delightful retreat, deep embowered in the bosom of a lofty grove, watered by a meandering stream, whose gentle murmurs soothed the mind to heavenly musings, he had drawn his first breath, and opened his infant eyes on the light of heaven—there in early youth he had closed the eyes of a fond expiring mother—there the sight of her sepulchre in the garden had oft melted him into the tears of filial sorrow—there he had received divine instruction in the law and the prophets, from the lips of a wise and pious father, since departed to God, and whose mortal remains he had deposited in his mother’s tomb—there he had often wandered through the flowery meads

and among the fields whitening for the harvest, exploring the sacred pages of David and Isaiah, and longing for the approaching appearance of the long expected Messiah; and there, since his eyes had been blessed with the sight of the Divine Redeemer, and his ears had heard the soul reviving accents of his voice, it had been his delight in these lovely retirements, to pour out the effusions of his soul in strains of grateful praise; but now the honour of his Saviour and the necessities of the poor disciples, demand the sacrifice of the much loved spot. He hesitates not a moment; he freely parts with the dear possession, and having received the purchase money, flies with eager haste to lay the whole without reserve or regret, at the Apostles' feet.

Alas! how deceitful is the human heart! What base counterfeits exist of every Christian grace? There were even in these days of primitive simplicity among the professors of the gospel, some unhappy characters, who, though they were not under the influence of those divine principles of brotherly love and

self-denying benevolence, which actuated Barnabas and many others, yet were desirous to appear to the church in the same amiable point of view with these generous Christians, and though they discerned some difficulty in accomplishing their desire, they flattered themselves that its attainment was within their reach. Vices are mutually accommodating, and when pride and avarice jointly rule the heart, each will readily lend its assistance to gratify the other, and thus strengthen their united dominion over the soul.

An awful instance of the truth of this remark appeared in the conduct of Ananias and Sapphira. They were a young couple, possessed of affluence, and without any children to provide for; they had lately joined the company of the disciples, and appeared to be very zealous for the prosperity and increase of the church; the motion of James for the sale of their lands and the disposal of the money, was to them totally unexpected; but they saw the powerful and extensive effects it produced on the minds of others, and they

were apprehensive they should forfeit the esteem of the Saints, unless they appeared equally influenced by it. But, alas! this world was their god! yet they determined to attempt the impossible task of uniting the service of God and Mammon, and after they had privately conferred on the best means of compromising the claims of ambition and covetousness, they fixed on a small piece of land which was not among the most productive of their domains, nor advantageously situated for improvement, and resolved to dispose of it, and devote the produce, as others had done, to the common stock, not doubting but then they should retain the honourable character for piety and benevolence which *they* possessed; but when they had sold it, and received the sum it produced in glittering silver, it appeared so tempting that they could not prevail on themselves to part with it all; but reserving a part, brought the remainder only, and presented it to the Apostles as the entire produce of the sale, not dreaming of detection or punishment.

The church in general regarded Ananias when he stepped forward with his money in his hand, and laid it at the Apostle's feet, with the same sentiments they had Joses and the other disciples who had devoted their earthly possessions to the claims of Christian benevolence; but a respect, fraudulently obtained, could not long continue. How certain is it that the eyes of him who walks amidst the golden candlesticks, are as a flame of fire? and how often are the most deep laid designs of hypocritical artifice disclosed in a moment, by the beamings of his wrathful indignation?

Informed by a sudden revelation from the sacred Spirit, Peter disclosed his base and daring attempt at deception, and pointing out the heinousness of his sin in lying to God the Holy Spirit, pronounced on him the awful sentence no sooner uttered than executed, of instant death, and on the entrance of the accomplice of his crime, who, ignorant of his dreadful exit, persisted in affirming the falsehood, denounced on her the same immediate doom; she instantly fell dead at his feet, and

accompanied her husband to the grave and to the righteous bar of God.

This tremendous event produced a double benefit to the cause of Christianity; it prevented those whose religion was only nominal, from intruding themselves into the fellowship of the church, and it affected the minds of many with a concern for their eternal interest.

It was not many days before a most remarkable effect of this awful proof of divine justice appeared. At a subsequent meeting of the Church, after several brethren had prayed, and we had sung an hymn of praise to the ascended Redeemer, Rechab, a brother well esteemed by the whole church, and who had continued to attend constantly with us ever since he joined us, which was on the day after Peter had preached his first sermon, at the feast of Pentecost, arose under the apparent weight of deep concern, and thus addressed the assembly:—

“Ye holy Apostles and Elders, and ye church of the living God, what would be your feelings if ye knew that one of your number

who had professed the holy name of Jesus, was no other than a deceiver and a spy, employed by the Sanhedrim to intrude himself among you, that he might acquaint them with your numbers and proceedings, in order that, availing themselves of his discoveries, they might be able to take more effectual measures for your utter extirpation; and should such an hypocritical wretch have been suffered to remain awhile undiscovered and unsuspected, fulfilling his accursed commission, by giving private intelligence daily to the enemies of the cross, of all your meetings and of the plans you were pursuing for the propagation of the Gospel, till at length the miracle by which the much less criminal fraud of Ananias and his wife was disclosed and punished, struck him with horror and remorse, and the keen empoisoned arrow of despair rankled in his heart? and is it possible that after all his baseness, such an unprincipled monster might venture to entertain any hope of pardoning mercy from that Saviour whose name he has so blasphemously and murderously abused?"

Here he paused, and for a moment the whole assembly stood mute with astonishment and terror, not one venturing to suspect who it was to whom he could allude, till, with a frame trembling with agony, eyes suffused in tears, and a voice clouded with sorrow, he proceeded—

“Such a wretch is present! yes, disciples of the Saviour of sinners, I am the man! and a fate unspeakably more dreadful than that of Ananias awaits me! the terrors of God are come upon me, and I scarcely dare to solicit mercy from him, or pity from you!” Here he ceased, oppressed with the weight of anguish, and fell to the ground.

The church in awful suspense and consternation fixed their eyes on the Apostles in silence, till the tender hearted John slowly arose from his seat, and turning towards the unhappy penitent an eye in which a rising tear expressed the benign compassion of his beloved Saviour, with a voice tuned to the most melting tone of pity, thus addressed him:—

“Great is thy crime, enormous thy guilt,

dreadful thy situation ; but the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God cleanseth from all sin, therefore if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Believe yet in him, for he is able to save thee.”

“ Brethren,” said Bartholomew, “ the conduct of Divine Providence is always regulated by the purpose of Divine grace, and is intended to bring about its fulfilment ; I cannot, therefore, but indulge a wish and entertain a hope that the reason why our Lord has suffered the hypocrisy of this man to remain so long hidden from us all, notwithstanding the power he has given us of discerning spirits, till, under the influence of conviction, he has confessed his crime, has been, that the value of his blood and the power of his spirit, might more gloriously appear in his conversion and pardon.”

Peter looking round on the assembly thus spake : “ Moses said unto our Fathers in the wilderness, ‘ Be sure your sins will find you out.’ We have seen his words fulfilled in

the vengeance which has fallen on Ananias, and we see them now again accomplished in Rechab, perhaps in mercy to his soul ; but it is necessary to receive some satisfactory evidence of the sincerity of his repentance before we can with propriety regard him as a brother, and admit him to the communion of the faithful. I therefore ask thee, Rechab, What hast thou received of the council as the reward of thine iniquity ? and to what purpose dost thou now intend to apply thine ill-gotten gains ?”

“Holy Disciples and ye Saints of the Most High,” said the poor trembling penitent, “whether I may hope for credit from you, or forgiveness from the Lord Jesus I know not ; but whatever becomes of me, I can no longer retain the five hundred shekels which I have received from the High Priest, but will go immediately to the council chamber and return them, confessing my sin against the great Messiah ; and though I think it probable that they will put me to death, and I feel that I am unfit to appear before the Crucified One, yet I desire to

sacrifice my worthless life for the honour of him whom I have abused, and beseech you to pray for me, that he may yet pardon my foul offences, and receive my soul to his mercy."

The Son of Consolation then softly replied to him, "Rechab, we compassionate thy case; but the tender mercies of creatures are cruelty compared with the compassion of Jesus; he hath said, 'him that cometh I will in no wise cast out;' it is his delight to repay injuries and insults with favours and kindnesses; he will forgive thy sins, remove thy pollution, and bestow on thee the joy of his salvation; fly thou to him for refuge, whose arms are open to receive thee."

While Barnabus was thus speaking, the penitent was overcome by his emotions, and for a time remained incapable of uttering a word; but at length, with a voice interrupted by sighs, he sobbed out, "There is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared; at his feet will I cast my polluted soul, and if he save the treacherous Rechab, no sinner hereafter need despair."

“Brethren,” said the beloved John, “you see what our ascended Redeemer has wrought. Are you all satisfied that this man is blessed with repentance unto life? and can you receive him as a brother for whom Christ died? To this they replied by uplifted hands, and Rechab, bowing his head, after Philip had prayed, departed from the assembly to return the money he had received from Caiaphas, as the wages of unrighteousness.

As he entered the court of the temple, on his way to the chamber where the priests and elders were then assembled in council, he met one of the priests, who accosted him thus:—

“Welcome, faithful Rechab, what intelligence hast thou to communicate to us? Hast thou made any farther discoveries of the proceedings of this fanatical sect? or what is the intent of thy coming?”

“To aver,” said Rechab, “that I am one of the basest and most unprincipled of villains; that in consequence of your most seductive arts I have assumed a character which I can no longer sustain; to restore the accursed

wages of iniquity which I received from you, and, in spite of your displeasure, to assure you of the badness of your cause, which admits of no support but from the meanness of hypocrisy and treachery; take then these execrable gains, for never will my returning conscience cease to rack me while I retain that sordid pelf for which I dared to hazard the everlasting displeasure of the Crucified One—the true Messiah—the king of Israel.

The priest, though struck with astonishment, and fired with rage, was not so blinded by either, as to prevent him from reasoning on the expedience of proceeding to extremities with this man, who was well known in the higher circles of society, as employed by the Sanhedrim, and possessing their confidence: it was true, he was totally lost to them, yet he considered that, to render him the victim of an ill-timed revenge, might be a means of preventing others from serving them in a similar way, and as others of their spies, as well as Rechab, were in possession of important secrets concerning the disgraceful means by which they supported their influence over the

people ; a severity which might irritate, while it intimidated them, would perhaps produce a discovery of what was so much their interest to conceal. Under these ideas, he directed Rechab to wait in an anti-chamber while he went in and related the sad tale to his colleagues, and besought them to consider the most proper ~~way~~^{way} of acting towards him.

The assembly heard his report with surprise and terror, and some of them proposed instantly to put Rechab to death ; but the more moderate party, headed by Gamaliel, after some debate, appeared the most numerous, and at length it was agreed that he should be called in before them, and that Caiaphas should, in their presence, sharply reprimand him, and while he held forth the highest rewards to induce him not to desert their cause, should, on the other hand, threaten him with the most cruel death, if he ventured to betray any of their secrets to the Nazarenes.

The high priest, in pursuance of this determination, exhausted all his powers, both of persuasion and terror ; but, superior to all his allurements and menaces, Rechab stood

before him with a modest, yet undaunted countenance till he had closed his speech, and then made this reply :—

“ The offers you have made me, O high priest ! though you were to add to them all the riches of Jerusalem, could not possibly tempt me to endure, for a single moment, much less through eternal ages, the misery and horror I have felt since I have been convinced of the base and treacherous part I have been induced by you to act against the true Messiah—the Holy One of God, and the only Saviour of sinners ; and the infinite mercy I have received from him, in pardoning my transgressions, has rendered me fearless of the most cruel tortures that your malice can threaten to inflict on me.”

Amazed at his boldness, they stood awhile silent, and at length the high priest, threatening him with instant death if he informed the Christians of any of their plans with which he had been intrusted, bade him depart immediately from the council.

He returned with joy to the disciples, and informed them, at their next assembly, of all

all that he knew, on the hearing of which they sang an hymn of praise to the Redeemer.

I pass over the well known circumstances which Luke has recorded, concerning the apprehension and death of Stephen, only noticing, that since my conversion, I had not seen my early companion and fellow-student Saul, as my expulsion from my father's house had removed me to a distance from my old acquaintance, and with the exception of my attendance on the public meetings of the believers, I had lived almost secluded from society, at the house of Joachim, supporting myself and my wife by writing copies of the Scriptures for the new converts to the faith of Christ; but soon after the death of Stephen, I was much surprised by receiving a message from Bethphage, by a special messenger, who informed me that my father was suddenly taken ill, and desired to see me before he died; I followed the man without delay, and on entering I saw my mother in tears, who told me that she was afraid that my father would not be able to converse with me, for since the fever had attacked him he had been

very seldom free from delirium, and in those few intervals he had, was generally dosing; however, she conducted me to his chamber, and when I approached him, he knew me, and said, "O Eleazar! I find too late that I have been fighting against God; my own righteousness I feel will not support me in death!" Afflicted as I was, I strove to point him to the Messiah, as described by Daniel, cut off, but not for himself, finishing the transgression, and making an end of sin, bringing in everlasting righteousness, and making reconciliation for iniquity. He listened eagerly for a while, but whether he received the truth I know not, for alas! in a few minutes a convulsive spasm seized him—he grew again delirious—the convulsion returned a second time, and he expired!

Never had I known before so solemn a moment as when I beheld him a corpse, saw my mother's anguish, and felt the torment of awful apprehension for the state of his departed spirit; resignation to the divine will appeared an almost impossible duty, but the ascended Redeemer mercifully supported me,

and calmed my murmuring thoughts, from the consideration of his sovereignty and my own unworthiness ; I could do nothing for a parent already departed, but I had still a surviving one, whose eternal interest it was both my duty and inclination to seek.

I was now also entered on a new sphere of duty ; the patrimony, excepting the provision which my mother was entitled to, descended to me, and required my attention, and I found a variety of employments useful in relieving my mind, but my chief source of consolation lay in the enjoyment of the presence of the Saviour, in the exercises of prayer and meditation.

I soon sent for my beloved Nirza, and the heart of my mother, softened by distress, gladly received her tender attentions ; but what amply repaid past days of suffering, was the discovery that the conversation of my wife had led my mother to the Saviour's feet.

The persecution that commenced with the death of Stephen raged with increasing violence ; it rendered it impossible to hold our public meetings with any degree of security ;

it scattered many of the brethren ; but instead of injuring the kingdom of Christ thereby, it promoted its extension and increase ; for these exiles, wherever they went, began to publish the good news of salvation among their fellow sinners, and the hand of the Lord was with them, so that many believed ; some of these itinerant preachers had not indeed been in public character in the church, but they had felt the power of redeeming love ; they pitied those who were perishing for lack of knowledge ; and the love of Christ constrained them, where they saw sin-diseased souls perishing in their iniquities, to make known the physician from whom they had themselves obtained a cure ; they were well assured that the oracles of God were, in the Christian Church, as well as in the Jewish, committed to the whole community, and not to its officers exclusively ; and though the suffrages of the people were necessary to constitute officers, yet, without them, every one who knew the gospel, had a right to communicate it to those who were ignorant of its truths.

It was a peculiar honour and happiness conferred on me at this time, that, from the retired situation of my house, it afforded me an opportunity of entertaining and concealing for awhile, from the fury of their enemies, several of the followers of Christ, who were obliged to fly from their habitations in the city on account of their attachment to his name ; but what gave me the greatest pleasure, was the opportunity of gratefully requiting the kindness I had received in my distress from my cousin Joachim, who, with Joanna and their family, found it necessary to quit their habitation, and seek with me an asylum, like that my wife and I had found in their hospitable dwelling ; and I could but admire the wisdom and kindness of Providence, in ordering the time of my father's death, and my succession to his inheritance, for had it occurred a few weeks earlier, I should have sold it as the other disciples had done, and have thereby become incapable of attending to the claims of gratitude and brotherly love.

During this period Saul was indefatigable in promoting the persecution of the church ;

all the energies of his ardent and active mind were concentrated in this one object ; he made daily havock of the saints, and lodged many in prison.

In the course of his researches he obtained intimation of my return to Bethphage, and came over to visit me, with the view of convincing me of my delusion, and restoring me to the Pharisees, or, in case of failure, to make me the next victim to his misguided zeal.

He began first to reason with me in a comparatively mild and gentle style, hoping to win me back to his party ; he paid the highest compliments to my talents and virtues, and expressed his astonishment that I should be so mistaken as to renounce excellencies, which he said, afforded me so high a claim to the divine favour, to trust in one, who, had he possessed sufficient power, would doubtless have exercised it on his own behalf, and have delivered himself from the hands of his enemies ; especially, as by such an act, he would have convinced them of the reality of his pretensions, and secured their attachment to his

cause: he urged me, by all our former friendship, by all my promising prospects of wealth and power, and by every consideration of a religious nature he could produce, to return from my error, and unite with him in the extirpation of the Nazarenes.

But when, in reply, I had simply stated the facts that led to my conversion, the views I now entertained of divine truth, the cause to which I attributed the reception of those views, and their effect in subduing my proud spirit at the feet of the exalted Redeemer, he lost all temper; his eye appeared the interpreter of the deadly sentiments of his heart, and, with a voice like the roar of an infernal, he swore by the Lord God of our fathers, he would instantly go to the council, and deliver me and mine up to their resentment; and shaking off the dust of his feet against me, he left the house in a rage.

I was rather surprised that for several succeeding days I heard nothing of him, and at length was informed that he had left Jerusalem, and was gone, with a numerous escort, on some distant and important commission

for the high priest; but soon after I received the following letter, the contents whereof almost overpowered me with pleasing surprise;—

“ O ELEAZAR !

“ From Damascus, the scene of his intended cruelties, where, not content with destroying the lives of the saints, the rancour of a Pharisee would feign have murdered their souls, by compelling them to blaspheme the name they loved and adored, Saul, the execrable, (yet, O amazing heights of love divine! O depths profound, unfathomable, of eternal wisdom!) Saul, the pardoned enemy of Jesus, writes thee, to increase thy wonder at the miracle of grace He, the friend of sinners, has accomplished.

“ Thou knowest, my friend, my brother, the particulars of our last interview, and in what a violent paroxysm of rage I departed from thy house, vowing to deliver thee up to the vengeance of the council; and I was proceeding with hasty strides across the valley towards Jerusalem, with a determination to accomplish my purpose, when I met a servant of Caiaphas, who informed me that he was sent in search of me, to call me to attend instantly at the palace of the high priest, who was about to intrust me with a most important commission. I followed him eagerly, but still with a determined intention to give information concerning thee to the high priest; but the moment the eye of Caiaphas caught me, as I entered the palace, he exclaimed, ‘Saul, in how short a time canst thou prepare thyself for a journey on business of no less importance than the immediate and total extirpation

of the detested Nazarene sect from the city of Damascus, where, we have received intelligence, a considerable number of the wretches are collected?’

“ ‘In a moment!’ replied I, with eager warmth, ‘in a moment, great high priest; my heart bounds with transport to think that I should be counted worthy to have so high an honour conferred on me; give me but my commission, and I am gone; and while travelling with rapidity to my destination, and invoking Israel’s God for his assistance against the blasphemers, his spirit shall inspire me with wisdom to discover, and power to destroy them.’

“ The vastness of the object before me so completely filled my soul, that in the universal hatred I bore to the church, my rage against thee was for the time forgotten. Soon was I on my road, accompanied by a band of men as prejudiced, but more ignorant, and therefore less guilty, than myself. O the depths of divine sovereignty! I—I am pardoned, and they are left.

“ Swiftly I led them forward, yet the journey, rapidly as we proceeded, appeared tedious to my impatient mind; breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples, I longed to enter on the career of blood; already in imagination I immolated a multitude of victims at the altar of my misguided zeal, and rejoiced at the prospect of enjoying their miseries, and feasting mine eyes with their torments. God of Eternal Justice! why slept thy thunders? Why did not thy vengeful lightnings blast thy foe?

“ The day was hot but gloomy; the sky was overspread with clouds, as if the sun had hid his face, that he might not behold the monster who was seeking the extermination of the servants of his Maker; when on a sudden, just as the

distant turrets of the city arose in view, a light, far surpassing the meridian brightness of that sun's unclouded ray, shone full on my head, and amidst the unsufferable splendour appeared the Crucified One, with every feature I had seen in his face while he was on earth, but brightened with celestial glory; his piercing eyes were fixed on me, and with a voice which was intelligible to me alone, but to my attendants sounding like the inarticulate roar of distant thunder, he called aloud, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' Through all my nerves thrilled horror inexpressible; trembling and convulsed, I fell to the ground, and had scarcely strength left me to articulate faintly, with a broken and tremulous accent, 'Who art thou, Lord?' 'I am Jesus,' returned he, 'whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee, a feeble worm of the earth, to rush on the pointed spear of my indignation.' O what language shall I employ to describe the sensations I experienced? I saw, I felt a God! I could withstand Omnipotence no longer; my righteousness departed from me; nay, so odious did it appear to me, that I threw it away as dross and dung; all that zeal, in which I placed my chiefest glory, I now ranked as the foremost in the long black list of my crimes; and while I felt, and confessed without reserve, that I was the chief of sinners, and was amazed that I lived, I found that I could not but intensely love the Saviour, who, though he overwhelmed, yet supported me, and while he upbraided me justly with my guilt, yet, by the name he assumed, encouraged me still to hope that notwithstanding my vileness, I might yet taste forgiveness; I found all the powers of my soul, under the weight of his divine and irresistible influence, totally transformed; I wanted to sink into nothing before him; to have no will

but his; 'Lord,' said I, from my inmost soul, 'what wilt thou have me to do?' 'Arise,' said he, with a soul-reviving smile, 'and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou shalt do.'

"I strove to rise, but when I endeavoured to look about me, I perceived that I was in darkness, the unsufferable brightness of his appearance had deprived me of sight.

"My companions had been terrified at the blaze of light, and at the thunder, which they supposed it to be, for they had not seen the Lord Jesus, nor heard the words which he addressed to me, nor were they yet recovered from their affrighted state, but they were capable of seeing the way, and finding the condition I was in, they led me into the city, and conducted me to the house of one Judas, who, when he perceived my situation, took me into a back chamber, where I desired to be left alone to my own reflections; but oh! what a weight of crowding emotions agitated my breast; and so much was my heart affected by them, that for three days I was rendered incapable of the enjoyment of food or rest.

"The holy Law of God, in my obedience to which I had placed all my former hopes of acceptance with God, now displayed its extent, purity, and spirituality to my view in the most striking light, and all the most splendid actions of my former life, when compared to that standard of excellence, I now saw to be defiled and black as hell. I died to all my former hopes; I saw myself in the hands of an offended Sovereign, who might justly execute the sentence of condemnation upon me, and that the alteration in my views of myself could not entitle me to any claim on his mercy; that there was no more merit in my present fears than in my former false hopes;

and that nothing whatever that I could hereafter perform would place me on fairer grounds to expect favour from a just God; but blessed be his name, in the character and conduct of the holy Jesus, I saw not only the purity of the law exemplified, but its claims answered, and in his sacrifice the rights of divine holiness secured, and ample satisfaction made to justice for the vilest transgressions; I believed the testimony of the prophets concerning him, and I beheld in his resurrection and exaltation, an ample confirmation both of the veracity of their predictions, and the all-sufficiency of his righteousness, to justify my guilty soul; I panted after the light of his countenance as my highest happiness, and was indifferent whether I should ever recover my bodily sight, so I could but mentally gaze on his glory till I should be transformed to the likeness of his holiness.

“ On the third day I beheld in a vision an aged and venerable person, whom I had never seen before, coming in and laying his hands upon me, saying, ‘ Brother Saul, receive thy sight,’ and while I was studying what could be the purport of the vision, the door opened, and a man came in, who addressed me in the words I had heard, and scales falling from mine eyes, I looked up and saw the man who had appeared to me, then standing before me, and after hearing from him the commission he had received from the Lord Jesus to restore my sight, and further conversing with him on the Redeemer’s love, I arose, and received instant baptism from his hands, and Judas having brought in meat, I ate, and was strengthened, and glorified God.

“ Having thus received mercy, I began to preach Christ in the synagogue, that he is the Son of God, and to confirm and strengthen that cause I came hither to subvert, and here

I suppose I shall for some time continue ; but I am at my Saviour's disposal, and should he permit, I shall rejoice to see my Eleazar at Jerusalem, that we may adore and magnify the matchless grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is God over all, blessed for ever. Amen."

"SAUL."

While the receipt of this letter filled me with grateful pleasure, on account of Saul, for whom I had so long felt a friendly affection, it also afforded me much satisfaction on account of those disciples who resided with me, and whose prospect of remaining undiscovered was much more probable, since they had nothing to fear from Saul, who was before the object of their apprehensions.

Some time after these events, there was a treatise written by one Hoshea, a man of very considerable eminence in the profession of medicine, which much engaged the public attention ; it contained a great quantity of elaborate sophistry, and was composed in a very popular style, and its object was to invalidate the miracles wrought by Jesus Christ and his apostles, by representing them as the merely natural effects of certain physical

causes; this was the only ground that could be taken with any probability of influence on the public mind, for it was in vain to deny their reality, because they still continued to be wrought daily in the view of multitudes of astonished spectators of different descriptions. The enemies of the cross laboured with the most active diligence to promote the circulation of this tract, which they imagined to be unanswerable, and many of the scribes were daily employed in transcribing copies of it for dispersion.

The church, when apprised of it, considered it necessary to appoint some suitable person to answer it, and expose the fallacy of Hoshea's reasoning, in order to undeceive those who might be deluded thereby, and, by unanimous consent, Luke, the beloved physician, who was in every respect well qualified for the work, was requested to undertake it, rejoicing that it had pleased the great Redeemer to provide them a person so able to encounter this adversary, on the principles of his own science, and who was well known

and respected through the city for his skill and integrity in the line of his profession.

Luke readily engaged in the work at their request, desiring the assistance of their united prayers, that the Divine Spirit would enable him to frame such a reply, as might not only prove effectual to the conviction of those who had been deluded, but also to him who had deceived them; and having completed his work, wherein he not only perfectly invalidated all the arguments of the enemy, but effectually turned them against him, proving his entire ignorance of the nature of causes and effects, especially pointing out his absurdity in omitting to notice the greatest of all these miracles, the resurrection of Jesus, with its concomitants and effects, the irrefutable evidences of which he clearly and forcibly stated; he produced it to the church, who, with the apostles, highly approved it, and took the necessary steps to disseminate it as widely as possible.

The disappointed adversary felt the evident superiority of his opponent, especially as the

popularity it attained proved the advantage the religion of Jesus had received from his feeble opposition, and deprived him of the ample rewards which he had expected to receive from the rulers for his success, and his mortified, yet unhumbled pride, preyed so forcibly on his feelings as to produce a state of mental derangement, and in his ravings he was often heard to cry out of the power of the Galilean. This event tended to impress the minds of many with terror, and some of the most violent opposers were afraid to act any longer as persecutors of the believers.

The disciples of the Saviour consisted chiefly of men who were destitute of human learning and eloquence, and their low and obscure station in human society precluded them from extensive acquaintance with the world, but they knew and felt that none of these accomplishments were necessary to render the doctrine of the cross effectual in the conversion of souls, and they had constant evidence that those men who were made most successful in winning sinners to embrace the Saviour, were those who had been

taught solely of God; yet they did not despise any branch of knowledge of which they were not possessed; but they were sensible of the proper use of science in general, when consecrated at the foot of the cross, to repel the efforts of false reasoning, and destroy its influence on ignorant minds, and to convince the enemies of divine truth, that though the religion of the gospel could never have been discovered by reason, yet it was in itself highly rational and worthy of its Divine author. Hence the labour of love which had been so successfully accomplished by Luke, endeared him much to the hearts of his brethren.

It was soon after this circumstance that Saul, being persecuted at Damascus, and having narrowly escaped with his life, came up to Jerusalem, and presented himself to the disciples, desiring to join in fellowship with them; but their surprise was mingled with terror, and many, particularly among the younger and weaker converts, thought his designs were insidious; his past conduct, especially at the death of Stephen, was fresh in

their remembrance; they had heard of the journey of extermination on which he had gone to Damascus, though in general they were ignorant of its results. Nothing that he could himself alledge was of weight to destroy their suspicions, as they knew that a man of his brilliant talents, and extensive erudition, was capable of supporting, with spirit, the appearance of any character he chose to assume. A case like his, as stated by himself, required much stronger evidence to render it credible, than the profession of any called out of the world, and not previously known as subtil and malicious enemies to the Redeemer's cause.

It is true I had communicated to some of them the contents of the letter I before recited, but such was the general opinion concerning the man, that it was supposed by many to be part of a plan of deep-laid artifice, to worm himself into their confidence, and by obtaining possession of their secrets to be able more effectually to injure them; but Barnabas, who had corresponded with the saints at Damascus, produced such convinc-

ing proofs of his ardent attachment to that Saviour whom he once hated, and of his having boldly preached Christ in the face of his enemies; that they were at length constrained to credit his account, and with joy admitted him to the most intimate fellowship, admiring the grace that had subdued his proud and prejudiced heart.

For my own part I had entertained no doubts of the reality of his conversion ever since the reception of his letter; but my joy at that happy event was much increased when I beheld all those wonderful endowments which I had so much admired in him, now employed with all his constitutional ardour, in the service of the Saviour. It was during the residence of Saul in Jerusalem that a case occurred of a very affecting nature, and which very deeply interested the feelings of the brethren.

There was one Hananiah, an amiable youth, who had lost both his parents by death at an early age; a relation of his mother, who was a considerable tradesman in the city, took the orphan under his protection, brought

him up with the tenderness of a parent, and instructed him in his business. This young man had for some time been betrothed to Salome, the daughter and only child of his patron; she was a lovely woman, of the most sweet and engaging natural temper, possessed many elegant accomplishments, and the affection betwixt the youthful pair was of the most tender and ardent kind. The young man heard the apostles preach, and was called by grace soon after the return of Saul from Damascus, and about the same time the father of Salome^m was removed by sudden death. This event, of course, tended to delay the consummation of the intended nuptials; but the loss Salome had sustained rendered her doubly dear to the heart of Hananiah, and he strove, by every tender office in his power, to soothe and support her mind, knowing that she had no friend nor protector on earth but himself, her mother having died some years before. She tenderly felt the force of his kind attentions, and all her care was to repay him with equal affection, though she still was warmly

attached to the Sadducean sentiments of her late father, and could not listen to the suggestions of her Hananiah, when he pointed out to her Jesus, as the only source of abiding consolation.

A month after the death of her father, Hananiah heard Bartholomew preach, who, in his discourse to the church, with the wisdom and tenderness of a father, represented to the young disciples, of both sexes, the many snares and dangers which their age exposed them to, and particularly cautioned them against the formation of imprudent marriage connections, and uniting themselves in those tender bonds, to the enemies of their Lord.

“Remember,” said the venerable sage, “that the more amiable in person and temper, and the more kind and affectionate to you, an unbelieving partner proves, the more imminent your danger of being seduced by such an one from the paths of truth and piety. What present enjoyment can compensate a believer for the loss of the comforting presence of his Lord? What an alloy must it be to the happiness of the sweetest

intercourse of souls, to reflect that it may soon terminate in eternal separation? And how dreadful must be the apprehension, that your infant race would have early prejudices against the only Saviour instilled into their tender and susceptible minds, from those lips whose dictates they were bound to regard with reverence, and affection? Should distress assail you, what consolation can be expected from one who loves not Jesus? What communion in devotional exercises can subsist in a family, the heads of which are divided? and what reason will there be to expect dishonour to the name of the Redeemer, and many sorrows to yourselves, if you attempt to form connections betwixt such opposites as light and darkness, Christ and Belial?"

The mind of Hananiah was sensibly affected by hearing these painful though necessary and seasonable truths; and, at the close of the worship, when he retired from the assembly, instead of returning to his home, he directed his steps to the garden of Gethsemane, whose walks were opened to the

citizens, though the evening was far advanced, and it now promised him a scene of undisturbed solitude where he might indulge his melancholy reflections.

He entered the garden, and walking to and fro by the pale light of the moon in a gloomy alley, formed by two rows of spreading cypress, thus began to give utterance to the oppressive sensations of his heart.

“How difficult, and how distressing is my situation, gratitude, compassion and love, unitedly plead in favour of my lovely Salome, I have sought and won her virgin affection, and I feel that she possesses a place, alas, too high in mine! what favours have I not received from her father, favours it is impossible for me to repay even in the least degree, save by returns of kindness and tenderness to his dear orphan daughter. She has now no parent, no friend, no protector in a cruel world but myself, on my supporting arm the destitute mourner hangs as the feeble ivy on the cedar. A refusal on my part to complete our promised union, would probably break her fond, her feeling heart, while the ^{over} ~~best~~ thought of forsaking her,

racks with horror every anguishing fibre of mine : but is she not, all lovely as she appears to my imagination, a stranger, an enemy to Jesus ; to that adorable Saviour whose name is dearer than my life, my all ? There in this garden, then the scene of unequalled sorrow, he lay in agony on the ground, and pressed by divine wrath, sweat great drops of blood for me, on yonder hill whose bleak summit reflects the moons soft ray, he bare my sins in his own body on the tree. Here gratitude for infinite obligations swallows up every debt I can possibly owe to creatures, and can I dare to espouse an enemy to my dearest Lord ? I must tear the darling idol from my tortured heart, yes my beloved Salome, I must leave thee, but to what a state ; prejudiced against the Christ of God ! and will not those prejudices receive additional strength from the supposition that my attachment to the Saviour renders me false to my vows, but were not those vows unlawful ? No, surely, when I betrothed her in the awful presence of God, we were both alike Sadducees, and though infinite grace has since wrought an amasing change in me, she remains

unchanged as when she became my betrothed spouse. O labyrinth of difficulty, what clue shall guide me out of thy perplexing mazes! Blessed Redeemer, let a ray of thy enlightening Spirit, illuminate the darkness of my soul, shew me the path of duty, and however painful it may prove, yet assist me, my Lord, to pursue with undeviating steps, the course in which thou wilt have me to go, even though its termination on earth should be misery, distraction and death, yet it shall lead to life eternal beyond the grave. Thus Hananiah continued to bemoan his perplexed situation till the night was almost past, and at last quitting the garden with feeble steps directed his way to the house of his beloved Salome, and finding its inhabitants retired to rest, silently entered his chamber, where throwing himself on a couch, he passed the time in restless and melancholy reflections till the sun arose, without closing his eyes in sleep.

When he arose in the morning he opened the sacred word and read the saying of the wise man, "in the multitude of counsellors is safety." The words forcibly impressed his mind

as suitable to his perplexed and bewildered situation, and led him to the determination of communicating the distressed state of his mind to the church, and soliciting both their counsel and their prayers ; this resolution gave him a little present ease and composure, but still there was an important difficulty which arose in his heart, how in the interim he should be able to support the sight of Salome at breakfast, and in what manner he should converse with her ; gladly would he have avoided the interview, but he could form no just and reasonable excuse for absenting himself from her company, and his soul abhorred a falsity.

On entering the room where she was sitting, before he could accost her, she was struck with the pale and gloomy appearance of his countenance, and prevented him by saying, “My dear friend Hananiah, what has befallen you? your appearance indicates either disease or dejection. What is the reason you look more distressed than her you were wont so kindly to console?”

“My dear Salome” replied he, “I have been rather restless ^{ever} ~~to~~ night, and perhaps the want

of my usual repose may have occasioned some little alteration in my countenance, which your kind solicitude for me, magnifies into so formidable an evil, but I trust it will soon wear off, and I intreat you not to be concerned on account of it."

As he strove to appear more cheerful and to give the conversation a general turn, she said no more on that subject, but he could not but observe that she continued to regard him with a look of inquisitive tenderness which pierced his very soul, and had almost overturned all his resolutions, however, as soon as he could with propriety, he left her, and went to the house of Nicodemus, where he knew the believers would assemble that day.

It was customary in our meetings after they were opened by prayer and praise, for the apostles and elders to enquire of the members of the church whether any of them had met with any difficulty as to the meaning of the divine word, or any perplexity as to the path of duty, or any circumstance in the course of their experience concerning which they were desirous to receive instruction? Lebbeus

who took the lead as presiding elder that day, desired any of the brethren or sisters who had any thing on their minds to mention, to use freedom ; on which invitation Hananiah rose and stated the circumstances of his situation, and the feelings of his mind in consequence of the observations he had heard addressed to them on the proceeding day by the venerable Bartholomew, earnestly requesting information how he ought to act in the affair which lay so near his heart, and the supplications of the church on his behalf, that he might be strengthened to act according to the will of Christ when it should be made known to him. Art thou loosed from a wife said Saul of Tarsus; seek not a wife? art thou bound to a wife, seek not to be loosed? but if the unbelieving will depart from their engagements let them depart. A brother or sister is not under bondage in such a case.

The observation of our brother Saul said Lebbeus, applies directly my dear Hananiah, to the statement thou hast given of thy situation, hadst thou been free from all engagements at the time when the Lord Jesus called

thee by his grace, it would have been highly criminal to have formed a subsequent connexion with a woman who was a stranger to the Saviour, according to the observations of our beloved Bartholomew in his discourse yesterday ; but as marriage is not prohibited to unbelievers, but is honourable in all, it is certain that the connexion betwixt thee and this young woman was in no sense unlawful, and therefore that vow cannot now be lawfully dispensed with, but on every principle of justice and honesty the contract ought to be completed by marriage, for the religion of Jesus Christ lays its possessors under additional obligations to walk honestly towards them that are without, as well as among themselves.

It is true, that if on thy representation to thy contracted spouse, a representation which it is thy duty to make with all possible plainness and fidelity, of the manner in which the religion of Jesus Christ obliges thee to govern thy house and instruct thy children, she should refuse to fulfil the engagement, she has released thee from thy obligations, and thou art no longer under bondage, but if on the other hand

she submit to thy rules of domestic discipline, thou art bound to complete the intended union, and encouraged to hope that thy desire will be granted in the conversion of thy wife, and the united supplications of the church shall be added to thy own, that the God of all grace may speedily accomplish thy wishes by revealing his Son in her.

The young man heard these words with much affection and many tears, and bowing his head, returned his grateful acknowledgements. When he left the meeting in the evening he retired again to Gethsemane, to indulge the feelings of his heart, and to implore divine direction how to address his beloved at his return to her.

The evening was still and gloomy, the moon was not yet risen, and not a single star emerging from the darkness, shot its feeble rays across the sky; the awful silence uninterrupted by the least sound, and the sable shades of night succeeding to a day of brightness, bustle, and activity in the city, presented a contrast which seemed to render solemnity itself more solemn.

With some difficulty he traced his way to his former walk, and while he sat down on the mossy turf to wait the rising of the moon, these were his soliloquies.

How changeable are the views of feeble mortals! how different are my present feelings from those of last night! then duty seemed imperiously to forbid my indulging the fondest wishes of my heart; but now the further light which has been afforded me into the Divine will, assures me that I must prepare to indulge them, but with caution and trembling—a new and indispensable duty to my Lord, my Salomé, and myself, requires new grace and strength from Jesus to enable me to perform it aright; I am freed from one load of perplexity that pressed down my soul, but another, no less trying, falls on me in its stead! If my love remains an enemy to my Redeemer, ought I not, (dearly as I love her) to wish that she may refuse me for avowing my attachment to his commands, yet, alas! how do I dread to hear the fatal refusal from her lips; be still my throbbing, my rebellious heart remember that a murmur

against whatever may prove the event of duty is treason to my Lord ; but O, thou dear exalted Saviour ! have mercy on the immortal spirit of her I love ; let her not perish in unbelief ; but whether I shall ever embrace her or not as mine in this world, make her thine for ever ; and then, though we never meet more below the skies, we shall meet above, we shall be still more closely united in that blessed region where there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage.

But now especially strengthen me against the power of temptation ; and should she refuse to accede to the completion of our union, except on the dreadful condition of my relaxing in my obedience to thee ; or refuse to unite with me in the worship of the family, may I lose her for ever, rather than forfeit my allegiance to the Saviour of my soul."

The moon now rising from behind the eastern hills, though her face was now obscured by clouds, shed a faint light through the gloom, and Hananiah, arising, turned his face homewards.

When he entered the door he sighed in-

wardly. "O Lord! I beseech thee send now prosperity!" and on going into the parlour, he was much surprised to see Salome, who he supposed had been retired to rest, sitting in a musing posture with a book lying open before her. At his entrance she started, and, rising to come towards him, he saw her fine eyes moistened with tears, which she, in vain, endeavoured to conceal from his penetrating glance. He accosted her in the tenderest accents of sympathetic affection.

"It was but this morning," said he, "my dear Salome supposed me to be melancholy, but surely from her appearance and manner, I have now much stronger reasons to suppose that her tender heart is a prey to some hidden sorrow. Tell me, my love, the cause of your distress, and whether any new event has tended to disturb your tranquility. Believe me when I assure you that nothing lies so near my heart as the tenderest concern for your felicity, and yet you have sorrows to which you keep your friend, your Hananiah, a stranger."

"Dear, faithful friend of my soul," re-

plied the weeping fair one, “ you were not wont to leave your Salome so long and so frequently alone, as you have lately done ; and yet when I inform you, with as much composure as possible, of the surprising event which has occurred during your absence the past day, I am persuaded that you will rather rejoice than regret that absence which, in the course of Divine Providence, has led to such amazing results.

“ As ever since you have joined the Nazarenes, you have so frequently left me under colour of attending their meetings for the worship of Jesus Christ, I have for some weeks past entertained a suspicion that it was only a pretext to disguise the real cause of your absence, which I feared arose from an abatement in the affection you had possessed for me ; yet I could not reconcile this idea to the tenderness you manifested in my company, which was so naturally expressed on every occasion, that I found it impossible to regard it as counterfeited ; but when you left me yesterday morning, and remained out all the day, and nearly the whole night, I

began to fear that you had commenced a secret intrigue with some other woman, and that it was, for her conversation, that you quitted me. Tortured with jealousy, and almost despairing of ever regaining your lost affections, I was a prey to the most bitter sensations of mind ; but when I saw you in the morning looking pale and almost dejected, I could not reproach you, I felt how nearly your welfare affected me, and I was sorry you left me so soon. After your departure, feeling myself perplexed and uneasy, I took up the holy books of Moses, merely to search for somewhat which might, for a while, divert my thoughts from you, and while I was reading the blessings our father Jacob pronounced on his sons before his death, I was struck in a manner I never felt before till that moment with these words :—‘ The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come ; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.’ I know that by Shiloh must be intended the long-expected Messiah, the hope of our fathers ; and my conscience immediately told

me that our tributary state, under the yoke of the idolatrous Romans, was an undeniable proof that the government was now departed from Judah, therefore Shiloh must assuredly be come; but, then, who can be the person? All our national sects, though mutually averse to each other, agree in asserting that he has not yet appeared, and, with exception of a few impostors, whose claims were instantly confuted at their first appearance, no one but your Jesus has ever laid claim to the title, nor has there been any extraordinary gathering of the people but to him.

“My sceptical heart rejected this thought with horror, but it returned so strongly that I was induced at length to search the sacred books, in order to collect from the prophets all the information they afford respecting the person and character of the Messiah, and whether their description accorded to Jesus or not, and from the first revelation of him to Adam and Eve in Paradise, I found he was to be a bruised sufferer, though finally victorious over the serpent; from David, that God was to be very wrath with his anointed; that he was to

be betrayed by a pretended friend ; that his hands and his feet were to be pierced, and that he should be mocked and reviled in his sufferings ; from Isaiah, that he should be despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, bruised and wounded for our transgressions, bear the sins of many, and be numbered with the transgressors ; from Zechariah, that the sword should awake against the man, Jehovah's fellow, and that he should be wounded in the house of his friends ; and from Daniel, that at a period, exactly corresponding with the present time, Messiah should be cut off, but not for himself. The concurring force of these divine testimonies, marking out the sufferings of the Messiah, and the time of their occurrence, coinciding so exactly in every circumstance with the sufferings and death of Jesus of Nazareth, with the force of an irresistible torrent, bore down all my deep-rooted prejudices before it ; and with astonishment I cried out, It is ! It must be he ! for there can be no other to whom all these characters apply ; but he who was the object of my blind aversion ; surely Jesus is the Son of God, he is the

King of Israel! Streams of penitential tears gushed from my eyes, and I fell down before him, fervently imploring him to pardon the blindness of my prejudice, and admit me, though the most unworthy, to a share of his precious salvation.

“ During this time my thoughts had been occupied so entirely with these new and unexpected discoveries, that you, my Hananiah, and those jealous surmises concerning your conduct, which had previously afflicted my mind, were totally forgotten, nor did they once occur to my recollection; but after I had thus prayed, I felt a sudden weight of peace and serenity descend on my soul, and a new warmth of affection kindling in my heart towards the followers of Jesus; then I thought of you, not as before with jealous suspicions of your infidelity, but with more endearing sensations of affection than I had ever felt before, as the friend of Jesus, the Christ with whom I hope to spend not only time but eternity; and I longed for this happy moment of your return, that you might rejoice to see your

Salome desirous to be a follower of the Saviour.”

Surprise and joy rendered Hananiah for a while silent and motionless, till at length, recovering himself in some degree, he flew to his beloved maid, and, with a freedom he had never attempted before, clasped her to his bosom in a chaste embrace, mingling his tears with hers. Thus relieved, he at length broke silence in interrupted accents, and cried—“Dearest friend of my heart, now doubly mine in Christ Jesus, you know not, you cannot know, half the joy I feel in contemplating the amazing change that grace has wrought, till I have acquainted you with the events that preceded it, and the dreadful state of distress wherein my mind has been involved during the two past days.”

He then gave her an account of the effect of Bartholomew’s sermon on his mind, and the succeeding events as related, observing that the mercy he had witnessed so far transcended his hopes, that he was overwhelmed with gratitude for the kindness of the great

Redeemer, and as Salome was now delighted to join with him in prayer and praise, they fell down before the Lord, and Hananiah, having offered up their united supplications and acknowledgements, they separated, and retired to their rest.

Their marriage was not long delayed, and the whole church rejoiced with them, saying—“What hath God wrought.” The zeal and ardour of the disciples appeared evidently, in their constant attendance on the frequent meetings for prayer which were held from house to house, as well as on their more general and public assemblies.

In these social meetings, either of the apostles or elders occasionally presided. The word of God was read, and hymns of praise sung, to the ascended Redeemer. The brethren, when called on in rotation by the presiding elder, offered up fervent supplications, and as several in succession were engaged in prayer, it was very observable that they were remarkably free from vain repetitions, and there was a beautiful and edifying variety in the ground they went over; some were large

and diffuse in pleading for spiritual blessings ; others excelled in interceding for the church in general, and the extension of the gospel ; others were more led to state the trials and temptations of their afflicted brethren before the Father of mercies ; some excelled in pleading the promises, others in thankful acknowledgements of favours received, and many of very different degrees of gifts, were alike earnest in praying for those who laboured in the word and doctrine, especially when they were the subjects of persecution for the Saviour's cause.

Though they depended on the promised influence of the Holy Spirit to direct and assist them in prayer, they were sensible that his aid was not promised in order to supercede the use of means, and therefore the elders privately and affectionately pointed out to the brethren any improprieties of matter or manner in their prayers, which might tend to obstruct their mutual edification, and those friendly hints were received with equal kindness, and contributed much to the improvement of their spiritual gifts.

Many were the gracious and immediate answers which our heavenly Father afforded them, but none appeared more wonderful than that which occurred after the martyrdom of James the brother of John, when Herod at the time of the passover apprehended Peter and confined him in close prison.

As the numerous assemblies which that festival drew together afforded such superior opportunities of diffusing the knowledge of divine truth among multitudes who had been total strangers to it, the want of such a faithful and successful labourer as Peter, was deeply felt by the whole church; thousands of whom owned him as their father in Christ, and their joint petitions were offered up incessantly for his liberation; again and again they repeated their fervent cries that the God whom they served would in some way interpose to restore him to them: but still he remained in prison, till the night previous to the day in which Herod intended to bring him out to execution, many of them were assembled at the house of Mary the mother of John, surnamed Mark. Never did I perceive on any occasion, such an

effusion of the Holy Spirit as a spirit of prayer, as was then evident, in the fervent addresses of all the brethren who successively engaged as the mouth of the Church; they wept, they pleaded, they cried, and their mouths were filled with arguments; it was intended to continue their supplications the whole night. But soon after mid-night they were interrupted by a violent knocking at the outer gate of the court, when a damsel who was sent out to hearken, lest it should be some of their enemies, who had obtained an intimation of their meeting, returned almost breathless, without opening the gate, and told them that Peter was there. Scarce could we credit her tidings, though she persisted in it, till some said she was certainly seized with a sudden attack of insanity, and others cried out that Peter was privately murdered in the prison, and an apparition of him sent to announce his fate; but as the knocking still continued, some of the brethren went out, and, to their surprise, found him there, and introduced him, who calling for attention, gave us the wondrous account of his deliverance by an angel.

An answer so immediate and glorious, tended greatly to animate us in repairing to the throne of grace, under all our difficulties and trials, and many who had been weak in faith, were strengthened and encouraged thereby.

I pass by many interesting events which occurred, in order to return more directly to the narration of what especially regarded my own family; I lived much at home except when duty required my absence from that sweet retirement, where I enjoyed much pleasure, in the pious and affectionate conversation of my Nirza, now still more endeared to me as the mother of two lovely infants, and where my comforts were increased by beholding my aged mother, though decaying in her health, enjoying the consolations of the gospel, and evidently influenced by the truth in all her conduct. Called in advanced age, she was making a rapid progress in spiritual mindedness, and looking forward with pleasure to the approach of that day, which should set her spirit free from the prison of mortal flesh, and introduce her to the immediate presence of her

God. Long my mother did not remain on earth, one evening when we were conversing together on the delightful subject of the communion of saints with their Lord, and each other in a better world, she suddenly exclaimed, "He comes! He comes! Immanuel calls me, farewell my beloved children, love and follow Jesus, we shall soon meet again," and fell backward into the arms of Nirza. I flew to her and raised her, but the happy spirit was fled. We wept over the lifeless clay, but joy was mingled with our tears, at the thought of her happiness, and we felt grateful to our God, for the kindness manifested to her in such a delightful translation to the skies.

About six months after her death, my dear friend Jonathan the Publican, who as I informed you, was called by grace, at the same time the pride of my heart was subdued under Peter's first sermon, and who had been two years absent from Jerusalem, having accompanied the Apostle Thomas on a mission to the distant regions of India, entered my house unexpectedly, and saluting me, said, "My dear brother, I have thought it my duty to call on

you on my return, even before I delivered the letters which I am entrusted with to the Apostles, as I could not delay communicating to you the tidings which I am persuaded will be the most grateful news you could possibly hope to receive till your Redeemer calls you home to the enjoyment of himself." Surprised at his address, neither Nirza nor myself could form any possible conjecture, as to the nature of the intelligence he was the bearer of, but after the first moments of surprise were over, and we had provided some refreshment for the traveller, we besought him to satisfy the curiosity he had excited.

He replied, "I shall not then detail many events of the journey, on which I accompanied Thomas the Apostle, but reserve them to future opportunities of leisure, and at once enter on the narrative of an event which occurred in India, and wherein you are particularly interested.

"We were travelling through a cultivated part of the country, seeking an opportunity of conversing with the natives, on the great subject of our mission, the crucified Jesus, when

we beheld on a seat erected beneath a spreading fig-tree, which stood in the court before a noble mansion, a man sitting, who appeared to be about seventy years old, and, who had totally lost his sight; he was evidently a person of distinction, and was attended by several servants, who were using every effort to please and amuse him; but it appeared with little success, nothing seemed agreeable to him. Upon his countenance sat the marks of rage, disappointment, and chagrin; and the loss of his sight, instead of resulting merely from the effects of age, was rather in our opinion, occasioned by the continual ferment of violent, and uncurbed passions, as his whole frame was agitated with fretfulness and discontent.

“As he was incapable of discerning our approach, he continued talking hastily to his attendants, and we drew near enough without being observed, to hear him utter expressions to this effect.

‘ Is it not sufficient that I have been plagued so many years, by the desertion of my only child, to follow the God of the circumcised Jews, on whom may the curses of our affronted

deities fall for ever, but you must all conspire to torment a poor old man with your officious nonsense?' During this part of his narrative, Nirza felt herself strangely affected and changed colour several times, but neither of us spoke, but in anxious silence listened, while Jonathan went on with the old man's complaint. 'You wretched crew, I know you are all squandering without concern, the wealth which it has cost me so many years toil to procure, and when you have wasted it all, you will leave me to perish in darkness; O that I could satiate my revenge upon you! had I my sight, I would sacrifice you ye varlets, to the god of riches, but it is all over and I must be miserable for ever without deserving it.'

"We listened a while to his ravings with sensations of mingled pity and terror, till at length the Apostle calling him by his name, said, 'Calanus, that God against whom thou art raging, because thou knowest him not, is the Creator of all things, it is he who formed thine eyes and can restore them to thee again, and though thou art wishing to enjoy the light, only that it may afford thee opportunity to gratify

the malignity of thy wicked heart, in beholding the misery of thy inoffending attendants, whom thou wouldest sacrifice to thy accursed lust of gold. Be it known to thee also, that he can communicate to thee a new nature, and bless thee with an happiness, the nature of which it has never entered into thy heart to conceive, and that thou mayest now know his power, I say unto thee in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, look up, and behold the sun."

The feelings of myself and my wife at this moment were inexpressible, and at length after several fruitless efforts my Nirza cried out, "O Jonathan, my father! my poor unhappy father!" "Yes, my dear friend" said Jonathan, "it was indeed your father, but endeavour to hear the result.

"Calanus immediately opening his eyes, uttered a loud cry of astonishment and sunk down in a swoon; his attendants endeavoured to restore him, and on the first return of his senses, beholding the Apostle who stood before him, he said, 'O! who art thou that appearest by thy look and address to be one of

that nation which I hated, and who is that Jesus, in whose name thou hast restored my sight? Is he the God of the Jews' to worship whom my only daughter left me? Tell me that I may thank him for his mercy."

"Yes Calanus" replied Thomas, "he is the God of the Jews, and of the Gentiles also, but it was not to worship him, that thy daughter left her father's house; for though she was made sensible of the vanity of depending on the false gods whom thou hadst taught her to worship, yet both she and her teacher Eleazar, were then ignorant of the true glory of the God of Israel, but now to her also is made known the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, even Jesus, who was crucified as an impostor by the blinded Jews, but being risen from the dead and ascended to the throne of his Father, he hath sent and commissioned us his servants to preach repentance and remission of sins in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, where many of his murderers have obtained mercy, through the merit of that blood which they wickedly shed,

for he prayed for them to his Father when they nailed him to the cross, saying, 'Father forgive them, they know not what they do.' And while I call on thee to believe his testimonies, and receive the remission of thy sins; I exhort thee to repent of thy malice and revenge, and to love thine enemies for his sake, who died to bring strangers home, and to reconcile enemies through his blood."

"O thou messenger of glad tidings!" he replied with tears, "I believe thy words, for I feel more ardent love to this blessed Saviour for opening the eyes of my mind, than for restoring my sight. O how changed is the disposition of my heart! I hated God, myself, and all mankind; but now I seem to myself to live a new life, to reside in a new world, and to breathe the air of love: instead of wishing evil as I once did to every one around me, I feel an earnest desire for the welfare and happiness even of mine enemies! but come in thou blessed of the Lord, and all that are with thee, that while thou and thy companions partake of the refreshments of my

house, I may hear more of Jesus, and that I may learn the situation of my dear and long lost Nirza."

"We entered the house together, and beheld all the domestics pleasingly surprised at the unprecedented mildness of their lately ferocious master; they hastened to provide a dinner, and we soon sat down to a well furnished table, where after the Apostle had given thanks, all our conversation related to the person and love of our Redeemer, and Thomas gave Calanus a particular account of your marriage and the conversion of Nirza, with the events that followed, a relation which while it delighted, almost overpowered the feelings of the poor old man.

"In your father's house we took up our abode for a time, and as the Apostle saw it best to continue there at his request to preach around the neighbourhood, and your father was very desirous of communicating the joyful tidings of his conversion to you, I was dispatched with this letter, and also with the further communications of the Apostle to his brethren, the Apostles and Elders at Jerusalem."

It was a considerable time before either of us, overcome with joy and gratitude, could become sufficiently collected to read the letter, and when I began, it was longer before we could go through it; after reading a sentence or two, I was obliged to lay it down, till we had both vented our feelings in joyful tears. As nearly as I can recollect, it ran thus.

“Nirza my long lost ! long neglected child ! thy father, thy cruel and bloody-minded, but now, thanks be to the Saviour of sinners, thy penitent and affectionate father, employs his sight which he had lost for several years, but which has been miraculously restored to him by Thomas the Apostle of Jesus, with whom thou art acquainted, to inform thee that thy prayers are answered ; that thy unnatural parent has received from the dear Redeemer, the forgiveness of his transgressions, and the renovation of his soul.

“Tell thy beloved husband, that though the long distance which divides us, and the advanced age of thy father, renders it improbable that you should be able to take a journey to India in time to close his eyes ; an event which would be grateful to his heart, yet he rejoices in the prospect of meeting you both, my beloved children in a better world, and in the immediate presence of our Saviour God.

“Jonathan can inform you the circumstances which led to my conversion, but neither he nor myself can fully describe the amazing change produced by the gospel of Christ, on my

heart, especially respecting those two reigning abominations, malice, and covetousness, which entirely governed me.

“After my Nirza, the object of my fondest care had left me, enraged at her escape, I sought her in vain, to offer her a sacrifice to our infernal deities. As I had no hope of discovering her retreat, I left Judea under the power of enmity against the God of Israel, and returned to this country, tormented by raging passions. After I came home to my house, their power over me seemed to augment daily. I grew more and more savage and brutish in my conduct towards my domestics, turbulent and conflicting passions kept my mind in a state of continual agitation, like the waves of the ocean, when its surface is swept by tempestuous winds, and at length brought on a fever, which produced a disease of the eyes, which ended in total blindness.

“Though I was more dependent than ever on the care of my attendants, yet I repaid all their assiduities with execrations; though I was incapable of enjoying my wealth, I grew more attached to it than ever, and thought all my servants were squandering it away; miserable as my life was, I alike dreaded its close, which would remove me for ever from a world which was my all, and its continuance, lest I should be forced to endure want and poverty.

“It was in this wretched situation, while panting with rage, I sat under the fig-tree in the court, uttering fruitless ravings; the beloved Thomas as an angel of mercy was sent by the Lord Jesus to speak in his name, words which not only removed the scales from my eyes, but also the veil from my heart. Yes my children, the salvation of Jesus has entered the soul of your father, and delivered him from the power of those sins which seemed interwoven with his existence. I am become

dead to the world, nor do I value its riches, but that I may impart supply to the needy ; and my rancorous heart is subdued by the love of Jesus, so that I love mine enemies, and and wonder how I could ever indulge a rancorous thought."

Expressions of gratitude to the Saviour, and affection to us, concluded the epistle, which when we had finished, we rejoiced for the consolation.

To return to the affairs of the Church, it is needful to look back awhile to the time when Peter resided at Joppa.

Though the flood of light, which Jesus, during the time of his sojourning here, had poured into the souls of his disciples, and the additional communications they had received on the day of Pentecost, had given them lucid views of his divine person, and of his prophetic and priestly offices ; yet they as well as the whole church, had still but faint and indistinct views of the nature and glory of that spiritual kingdom, to erect which was one grand end of his coming into the world. And they were not yet divested of their ancient Jewish prejudices ; the peculiar favours which God had bestowed on Israel, instead of humb-

ling the generality of the people had been abused by them; as food for the pride of their hearts, and they were accustomed to regard the Gentiles as an inferior rank of beings, and though the disciples of the Saviour had felt his love overcoming their self-righteousness, and leading them humbly to expect eternal life only on account of his merit, yet the early prejudices they had entertained against the Gentiles, were not instantaneously subdued: this appeared in those who were scattered abroad by persecution, preached the gospel to the Jews only. Even Peter was infected with this national spirit, and an extraordinary vision was necessary to prevail on him, to visit even a proselyte, who had sent for him by the direction of an angel.

The glorious and unexampled success which attended his visit, in the descent of the Holy Spirit on all his audience without exception, when related publicly by him on his return, astonished the church, and wrought an amazing revolution in the views of those who had blamed him for his conduct, insomuch that they exclaimed with surprise, then hath God

also unto the Gentiles granted repentance unto life, and the result of this event was that a new stimulus was given to missionary zeal.

Those pious and zealous men who were inclined to devote themselves to missionary work, did not run before they were sent; they made known their desire to the church, who with the apostles and elders, examined strictly their motives and qualifications, and those whom they considered as fitted by the Lord Jesus for the work, were solemnly designated to it by prayer and fasting, accompanied with laying on them the apostle's hands.

But though such only who were thus sanctioned, were considered as regular missionaries, a portion of the spirit, was felt by the whole church, and each individual employed his energies in the diffusion of divine truth, in various ways.

Some devoted their leisure to the instruction of children in the holy scriptures, which they taught them to read, and endeavoured to explain to them in familiar language, suited to their ages and capacities.

Others visited the afflicted, and while they, by every kind office in their power, sought to alleviate their sorrows, improved the interest they acquired in their affection, by their tender attentions, by communicating to them spiritual instruction; and pointed them to the only source of abiding consolation, the compassionate Saviour.

Not a few employed themselves, in transcribing portions of the scriptures, to distribute gratuitously to the poor. Some visited every house in their neighbourhood in succession where they could gain admittance, and sought the most favourable opportunities of gradually introducing religious conversation in such a manner, as might least offend their prejudices to whom they addressed themselves, and lead their attention to the concerns of their immortal souls.

Others watched with tender care, those who appeared to have received serious impressions by their occasional attendance, on the preaching of the apostles and elders, earnestly solicitous that their blossoms might produce

abiding fruit, and not terminate in a ^e more formal or legal profession, nor subsiding entirely leave them under increased hardness of heart.

Nor were the most abandoned sinners neglected, the prisons were explored by those sons of christian benevolence, and their wretched inhabitants exhorted to flee from the wrath to come, and directed to the friend of sinners for salvation.

Though in many pleasing instances, the divine blessing attend these varied labours of love, and many real converts were added to the Lord, yet they who thus imitated the conduct of him who went about doing good, were often exercised with severe trials of their faith and patience.

But perhaps the most severe trial of these graces, was that, which believing parents felt, when the children of their house discovered awful proofs of the depravity of the heart, and neither parental nor divine authority had any influence to restrain them from indulging profane and licentious dispositions; my Nirza

and myself were for years severely pained with the conduct of some of our own children, on whom correction, instruction, and example appeared totally lost; yet amidst our distressing fears on their account, this painful dispensation of providence, was a most instructive one, for while it led us often with tears to the throne of grace, and taught us earnestly to plead the promises of a covenant God on their behalf, it gave us deep humiliating views of our rebellions against our Heavenly Father, and especially of our ungrateful requitals of his love by our manifold backslidings, after calling grace, and led us to bewail the imperfections we discerned in our conduct towards our children, and to seek strength from our Redeemer, to enable us so to walk before our house, as to induce them to view religion in a favourable light, while we waited in humble faith for the gracious display of that sovereign power, which alone could make them a willing people.

And when in either of them, we discern any favourable appearance of concern for their eternal welfare, our cries to God were redoubled on their behalf, that they might not rest in

convictions without an actual experience of the Saviour's love, and blessed be God, in one or two instances, we had at length satisfaction that the God of Abraham, was indeed the God of our seed.

After the return of Thomas from India, to relate the particulars of his successful mission, and to solicit the assistance of some fellow-labourers to accompany him thither, my heart and that of Nirza, were strongly inclined to accompany him and his fellow-missionaries on their journey, with the view of seeing and conversing with our beloved father Calanus.

I pass the circumstances of our journey, the protection afforded us amidst dangers and wanderings; the occasional opportunities which the apostle and his companions met with, of pursuing the grand object of their mission, and the success with which they were favoured. In this we rejoiced, but the particular object of our journey was continually on our minds, and as we drew nearer the end of it, we felt more impatient than we ought to arrive at the habitation of him whom we sought, and the consequence of our eager impatience was

an abatement of the fervor of our affection for the Saviour. Ah, how true is it, that the christian's greatest dangers arise from placing the dearest of creatures too near our heart!

But God knows well how to break the snare of heart idolatry. We were now arrived within three day's journey of the mansion of our father, and Thomas and his companions had just parted from us for different stations in the neighbourhood, when my beloved wife was suddenly attacked by a violent fever, which rendered her, at least for the present, incapable of travelling farther.

The afflictions of the people of God, however severe, are always accompanied with mercies; and we could but see that goodness and mercy was still following us, for we were now arrived at a pleasant village called Ebri, where we could procure much better accommodations than we could have done, had my wife's sickness befallen her at any former part of our journey, after we had left the land of Israel.

This painful dispensation was however a profitable one, it leads us both to a close ex-

amination of our hearts and conduct, that we might be led into the cause and design of the chastisement, and we saw clearly that the most lawful pursuits when followed with too much avidity, tend to draw away the heart from God, as certainly, and more secretly and imperceptibly than gross evils.

One day as I was sitting pensively by the side of the couch on which Nirza lay, I said tenderly to her, my love you are very ill ; our worldly comforts are at a great distance from us ; your sufferings are heavy, are you not ready to regret the long journey you have taken, and wish yourself at home ?

“ I shall never be at home till I behold the Saviour above, that is the only desirable attainment, but as to other things is it of much import in what particular stage of his travels the weary pilgrim receives his final dismissal from the perils of the way ; and are we not travelling in the path of duty, and where our Lord would have us to be ? ”

Alas I fear my Nirza, I have been the cause of the painful sufferings of her I love, my hasty impatience to see our father, has I fear

caused my Lord to rebuke my folly, by keeping us prisoners here.

“If this be the cause my husband, thy wife is equally to be blamed, for she has been as restless or more so for the sight of her father, than thou canst possibly be.”

Let us then both attend to the important lesson we are taught by the events, to place our happiness more entirely in our God, and leave all inferior concerns in his hands.

“Yes, as he has given us himself as our everlasting portion, let us ever consider our unspeakable happiness, and think whatever disappointments or trials here assault us, our best interest is secure.”

But my love as submission to the divine will, and thankfulness for whatever befalls us, by no means prevent our using every lawful means of alleviating or removing the pressure of calamity, I think it highly prudent that as I leave you in the hands of kind and careful attendants, I should hasten forward to apprise your father of your situation, and to request him to return hither with me.

“Go then,” said she, “my beloved, for as I am

apprehensive my present sickness will terminate in death, I earnestly wish to see him before I die.”

I departed with all possible speed not willing to lose a moment, though with a most painful pressure on my heart from her last words, for I had not conceived the idea before of the immediate danger of her removal, but had flattered myself that a few days rest would restore her; her own apprehensions therefore seemed to me too certain indications that I should speedily be separated from what I held dearest on earth.

I travelled day and night in silence, lifting up my heart to God in earnest sighs for her restoration, but intreating that if it was his sovereign pleasure to deprive me of a blessing which I had forfeited by idolizing it, my stubborn heart might be bowed to meek submission to a father's will; but yet I feared it was almost impossible that I could survive the heart rending stroke.

On arriving in the neighbourhood, I enquired of the first man I met, the way to the mansion of Calanus; who expressed much pleasure in

the hope of being permitted to accompany me thither—saying “*that* man who was once the terror, yet contempt of the country around us for his oppression and covetousness, is now the most esteemed and beloved of all men, for the extent of his unostentatious charities, the father of the poor, the friend of man.”

But how came this wondrous change of character? What has transformed him from a miser to a liberal man?—

“I will inform you Sir,” said he “by relating my own obligation to this wondrous man. I had formerly known him, and worked in his fields, but such was his oppressive tyranny, that I could bear his yoke no longer, but left him, and removed to some distance, and sought an employment else where.

I had (^{not seen} lost sight of) him for some time, and was totally unacquainted with the change which had taken place in him. I heard that he had lost his sight, and was since more furious and raging than ever,

“Some time since I was visited with a violent fever, which soon spread through my family, so that my wife and children as myself

were in great extremity and in want of common necessities ; we were also deserted by our neighbours, from an apprehension they had entertained of the fever being infectious.

“ Judge then my surprise, when one morning Calanus, the blessed Calanus, came into my cottage, leaning on the arm of a domestic, in possession of his sight, and with a countenance full of tenderness, enquired into our situation, sent his servant home for such refreshments as we needed, and also entered into conversation with me and my wife, and taught us what we were before totally ignorant of, that there^{is} (was) one God who^{is} (was) holy and just, and that we as sinners against him, deserved his vengeance ; but such was his pity and love to the wretched and lost, that he had sent his son Jesus Christ to save sinners by his death ; that this blessed Saviour had restored his sight and saved his soul, and that the influence of his love had rendered him desirous both to administer to the temporal necessities of his afflicted neighbours, and to direct them to that Redeemer who alone could make their souls both holy and happy for ever.

At first his words seemed very strange to us, and though we were glad to receive his temporal favours, we would very willingly have dispensed with his conversation, but as he frequently repeated his visits, it pleased God at length to open our hearts to receive the truth, and as his instrument, we owe both our lives and our souls to the kindness of Calanus."

During this interesting conversation, we arrived within sight of the mansion, when I parted with my guide, and walked on to the gate of the court, where I saw Calanus seated under the fig tree reading.

I entered, and approached him with a low obeisance, when, looking earnestly on me, he said, "My heart tells me there is something in that countenance not totally unknown to me, connected with very distant and affecting ideas, and yet I cannot say when or where I have seen you."

"Where Sir," I replied, "we were both very different characters from what renewing grace has since made us. Where I was a proud Pharisee, and you were a blind and stupid idolater."

Awaking as from a dream, he rose hastily, and threw himself on my neck, crying out, "O, my son! my Eleazar! I rejoice to behold thy face before I die; but where—O where is my Nirza?"

"She is not far off, my dear father," I replied again, "but I am truly sorry to inform you that she was taken ill at Ebri, where she now lies in a state of pain and weakness, desiring to see her father, but unable to proceed further on her journey to you."

"Then, my beloved son, we will go with all the speed my age permits to see my dear, my long-lost daughter. Come in and refresh yourself after your journey, and I will be ready immediately to accompany you. Almighty Saviour! how dost thou blend joy and sorrow—severity and kindness, in thy dispensations toward thy pardoned ones! Thou forgivest their sins, but thou takest vengeance on their inventions. I kiss thy rod, I adore thy wisdom, and amidst the most painful feelings, I rejoice in the prospect of a world where perfect and unmixed delight shall be enjoyed for ever."

We were soon ready, and travelled as speedily as possible to Ebri. On the road, we related to each other many of the dealings of God with our souls, and though our feelings were strongly excited, both in the relation of past, and the thought of present circumstances, yet, when speaking of the love of the dear Redeemer, our souls were sometimes raised above all earthly troubles, and we felt the peace of God descending on our spirits, and fortifying us against the painful dread of approaching trials.

When we arrived, and enquired of the domestics concerning the state of my beloved, we were informed that no amendment had taken place in her disorder, but she was rather weaker than at my departure. I endeavoured to allay the eagerness of my father to see her till I had first gone in to prepare her feeble spirits to sustain the affecting interview. I directed her maid to inform her that I was returned, and not to mention who accompanied me, but to tell her I would wait on her in a few minutes.

When I entered, I was struck with the

sight of her altered countenance ; she was sitting up on her bed supported by pillows, with an hectic flush on her cheek, which, at my appearance, was succeeded by a death-like paleness, but the expression manifested in her eyes was unutterable.

“ You must lose me for a while, most dear and amiable of men ; my heavenly lover calls me to his own embrace, but be not distressed, we shall meet again to enjoy sweeter communion with him and with each other, in a world where we shall never suffer nor fear separation from each other to eternity. Blessed be his dear name who has washed us in his blood, that he has permitted us this last interview below. Could my father come and behold his happy daughter, it would be all I wish till I see my Saviour’s face.”

Seeing her in this frame, I answered, “ he is come, my dearest, and waits to see you as soon as you can support so tender a scene.”

“ Let him come immediately ; I feel my time here is very short, more so than my Eleazar imagines ; but the Holy Spirit’s witness, the love of Christ felt in the heart, the

foretastes of the happiness awaiting an unworthy sinner, the approach of death disarmed and smiling, all conspire to render me superior to the pangs of parting; and I trust I shall not be so much overcome by the feelings of filial tenderness, as not to enjoy a sight so much desired."

I went out, and led in her father; he approached her with tenderness, but could only articulate "Nirza!" His feelings choaked his voice. "Father, cried my dying saint, reaching out her feeble arms to embrace him, "we have been long separated on earth, but, united to Jesus, we shall enjoy everlasting communion in glory; and though we must now, as soon as blest with each other's company again, endure a fresh separation, it will be shorter than our former one, and this is our comfort, it is the last."

Recovering his speech, as he fondly bent over her, and gently clasped her to his aged bosom, he said, "After all the sovereign mercy bestowed on us, the vilest of the vile, shall we venture to repine at any part of the conduct of a covenant God? No, his will be done,

however it rend our hearts with anguish: thy father and thy spouse must resign thee; enough that we are following in the same road, and we shall soon rejoin thee."

"O my beloved companion!" said I, "how can I part with so profitable a partner? how lonesome will my path be the little remainder of my pilgrimage: what shall I do?"

"When you gave up your all to Christ did you except your wife? are we not both his property? O! if you would render my last moments still happier, let me hear you say 'the will of the Lord be done.' My father has resigned me."

"I dare not controvert his will; I must submit! Lord help me to acquiesce! the Lord Jesus receive thy departing spirit!"

"'Tis done," said the expiring angel, "all is well;—one parting embrace—I am gone."

Then, after embracing us both, she lay back in the bed in expressive silence, till at length she broke it in these words:—

"The object of eternal love! a gift of the Father to the Son! redeemed by blood! called by grace! justified by faith! sanctified by the

Holy Spirit! matured for the blessed inheritance! I hear his chariot wheels coming to fetch me!—I come, my Lord, I come!”

A gentle sigh released her happy soul, and left us wrapt in sorrow, gazing on the breathless clay.

Here I must pause; the recollection affects me so much at this distance of time: I must take another day to resume the history.

ELEAZAR.



THE venerable old man the next day resumed his narration:—

“ After the departure of my wife, supported by the recollections of the sweet and consolatory expressions which dropped from her dying lips, and the joyful hope of soon meeting her in a better world, the painful stroke was alleviated to a degree beyond what I could have conceived possible, both to myself and her father; we felt keenly the loss we had sustained, but we were enabled to bless a taking God.

Ever since the promise of the land of Canaan for an inheritance had been given to Abraham, and more especially after he had purchased the field and cave of Machpelah for a family burying place, you well know my friends that our fathers were strongly desirous of depositing their mortal remains in the promised land, taking thus a kind of possession on behalf of their posterity, who were to inherit the promise in the faith of which they died, and when their God had delivered Israel from Egypt, and led them through the wilderness to the enjoyment of the promised possession, they there buried the remains of Joseph which they had embalmed and brought with them, and through all succeeding ages, every Israelite was desirous to be buried in the hallowed ground.

But the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah, having now succeeded to that earthly kingdom which was only a shadow of it, the same principle which had so influenced the saints, as to induce many of them to sell their inheritance and devote the produce to the relief of the poor, led me as my spouse had departed at so

great a distance from our native country, to inter her dear remains near the spot whence her happy spirit had ascended to her Redeemer, after which, as duty directed me to return to my children, I took a tender and weeping leave of my father-in-law, and travelled homeward.

I pass over the incidents of my journey, and the affecting interview with my motherless children on my return, to notice the concerns of the church.

During my absence, several important events had occurred, among which was the tremendous death of Herod, in the plenitude of his power; having concluded an advantageous peace with the Tyrians and Zidonians, he was desirous of receiving the congratulations of their ambassadors in public, and displaying both the magnificence of his court, and the power of his oratory. But when he had concluded his pompous harangue, the people shouted, "It is the voice of a God, and not of a man!" A moment only had he to enjoy the flattery of the multitude, ere smitten with an incurable stroke by the invisible hand of an

angel, he fell from his throne with a horrid yell, and was carried off by his terrified attendant, and laid on his bed, where he lay a monument of divine vengeance, in unutterable agonies, while a multitude of worms, devouring his putrid carcase, and crawling from his eyes, his mouth, and ears, rendered him a horrid spectacle for the sight, and the intolerable stench he exhaled made, it impossible for his dearest connections to approach him, till uttering the most dreadful blasphemies he expired.

Though the christians were not devoid of pity to their most inveterate foes, yet on an event in which the hand of God was so eminently seen in their deliverance from his persecuting rage, the death of Herod led them to meet together to acknowledge the divine interposition on their behalf, and to intreat wisdom and energy to enable them to improve the temporary ease they enjoyed, by more active labours to extend the boundaries of the kingdom. Missionaries went forth in every direction and the word of the Lord mightily prevailed.

Though after the death of the tyrant, the raging persecution which he had instigated much abated, yet there were still many ways practised of harrassing the disciples, many of whom supported themselves and families by the produce of their manual labour; these, when at any time they were destitute of employment were pressed with severe distress, and as every kind of artifice was resorted to by the Jews, to deprive the followers of Jesus of their means of subsistence, there were many of them whose cases attracted the notice of the church, among which was that of Jonadab at Nazareth, who was dependent for the employment of himself and family, on a man totally averse to the profession of christianity, and who basely took the opportunity of an epidemical disease having attacked his wife and several of his children to injure him the more deeply by withdrawing the whole of his employ.

At a meeting of the apostles and elders, Prochorus the deacon took the opportunity of mentioning the distress Jonadab and his family were in, and stirring them up to a con-

tribution for their present relief, and to adopt some measures for procuring him employment in future

The readiness with which this was acceded to, encouraged Prochorus further to observe that as cases of this kind were already not unfrequent, and were liable to increase, it would be advisable to institute a fund for future benevolence in similar cases, but how was this to be accomplished among those who were generally so poor in the world as the followers of Jesus? Economy and frugality alone could supply the means of benevolence. "My carriage and horses" said Minu, a christian, who had been called from an higher circle of society than his brethren, shall go for this purpose. and I will walk as Jesus did. "I will do the work of the house myself" said Sadoc, "and the expence of a servant shall be applied to the fund."

"These jewels" said a young female, "were presents from my grandmother, but had she been living, I am sure she would have approved my conduct in thus devoting them."

"Mother" said another, "I imagined I wanted

new garments, and you had promised to buy me some, but I relinquish the promise, I will wear the old ones, and let the money be given to those poor sufferers."

"I will work" said a brother "two hours extraordinary every day, and devote these earnings to this purpose." Many others adopted different economical expedients to increase the fund, and thus this work of christian charity was completed.

For a long period after this, my attention and concern were engaged much in my domestic connexions. My wife had left me with three children, two sons and a daughter; the latter was the counterpart of her mother in piety and temper: in her I had much comfort while she remained with me, but a connexion being formed betwixt her and a zealous young missionary, I could not, as I discerned much of a missionary spirit in her, but consent to their union, though the consequence of it, was to deprive me of all hopes of ever seeing her more in the present state, for soon after their marriage, they departed for Ethiopia to assist the Eunuch, who had written to Phillip to

solicit the aid of some pious missionary in propagating the faith of Jesus amongst his countrymen.

It is but seldom that I can hear from them, nor in the present state of our country, can I expect intelligence to reach me; what I have already heard satisfies me that both my daughter and her partner are blessed with extensive usefulness, and that though I expect no more to behold them on earth, yet when I meet them in glory, I trust they will be accompanied with a numerous train of souls called by their instrumentality, out of darkness into the glorious light of the gospel of Christ.

My son Cephas, whom I had so named from his birth, from a respect to that dear apostle who was my father in Christ, was a comfort to me; he had always been a dutiful and obedient child, and his morals were correct, his temper placid, his affection to me ardent, but I discerned no decided proofs of the converting grace of God having taken possession of his heart, till after the death of his mother whom he tenderly loved, at so great distance from him, the relation of her happy exit not only

excited in his heart the wish of Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous," but also influenced him to intreat of the ascended Saviour a present conformity to their character, a restoration to the divine favour in and through the righteousness of the Redeemer, and to the divine image by the work of the Almighty Spirit; and the Lord Jesus graciously condescended to answer his request; for from that period, never did I behold in a young person, and seldom in an aged experienced christian, more steadiness and consistence^v of character, more just views of divine truth, nor a higher degree of devotedness to God, than in him.

But he too is gone before me, he fell by the hand of an assassin, a martyr to his attachment to the Saviour!

But one son remained, and he was the greatest trial that I ever experienced; obstinate, perverse, rebellious to the last degree. Nothing appeared to affect his heart, the death of his mother, and that of Cephas, did not cost him a sigh or a tear, parental authority he despised, religion he ridiculed, and he left his

paternal home, to be freed from all restraint, and to be at a distance from my remonstrances and reproofs; joined with a set of abandoned characters, he united in all their excesses, and indulged every criminal passion without remorse, till his licentious life had reduced him to want and disease, and he ventured to return in a miserable situation to die.

Happy should I have been could I have seen him returning a sinner penitent, but, alas! though I received him with equal tenderness, I could not welcome him with the joy of the father in our Lord's affecting parable. My prayers, my tears, my repeated representations to him of the Saviour's boundless grace to the chief of sinners, did not appear suitably to affect and interest his mind; true he did not as formerly oppose and contradict me, but he maintained a constant and as I feared a sullen silence, though his bodily disease increased and threatened a speedy dissolution approaching. I mourned before God on his account; I lamented every instance I could recollect, wherein I had not acted with sufficient firmness and prudence towards him; I repeatedly committed him to

a covenant God ; I earnestly implored that I might yet see some token for good concerning him, but, alas ! though towards the last he did assent to the justice of his sufferings, he departed without my being able to indulge a hope that he was brought to Jesus, and I felt at his death what David did when he lamented over Absalom.”

After a long pause accompanied with tears and sobs, Eleazar proceeded with his narrative.

“Insulated as I now was respecting all worldly connections, I sold my estate, and bestowing the principal^a part of the produce on the poor of Christ’s flock, I reserved a little for my necessary support, and devoted the whole of my time to visiting the sick, instructing the ignorant, and comforting those who were exercised with trials and temptations, waiting till my Lord shall be pleased to call me to rejoin my departed friends in the world of the spirits of the just made perfect. Thus I continued employed, and under all my sorrows was favoured abundantly with the gracious presence of our ascended Lord, and the rich

foretastes of future glory he was pleased to indulge me with, often raised me above all my troubles, and enabled me to glory in tribulation.

But when the Roman armies, according to our Lord's prediction, approached towards Jerusalem, as my flight was unincumbered, I soon sought and found with you my dear christian friends a safe retreat in this retired Pella, this little Zoar.

Having finished my story, permit me to remark, that the words of the Lord Jesus will be fulfilled, obstinately as Jerusalem is defended, it will fall. Our deluded countrymen have filled up the measure of their iniquity in rejecting the word of life preached by the apostles of the ascended Redeemer, wherefore wrath is come upon them to the uttermost, but the church of Christ is safe, it will extend widely among the Gentiles, and increase amidst opposition and persecution; but when ease and plenty are enjoyed, and the great men of the earth profess christianity while strangers to its influence, the purity of its doctrines will be corrupted, its worship pol-

luted with the addition of human inventions, and such a secular kingdom erected, as the Pharisees expected Messiah to introduce.

But a remnant shall remain to bear witness to the truth; they shall endure longer and more violent persecutions from the perverters of the Gospel than they had suffered from Jews or Heathens, till at length this opposing power shall be consumed by the breath of the Messiah's mouth, and destroyed by the brightness of his coming; then shall the veil be removed from the hearts of the remnant of Israel, and all the nations shall bow to the Sceptre of our glorified Lord."

FINIS.

THE BACKSLIDER.

(A TRUE NARRATIVE.)



IN a congregation in the north of England there were twelve serious young men, who weekly met together for prayer, reading the Scriptures, and conversing on the concerns of eternity.

Among them was one youth, who not only possessed a great superiority of talent beyond his companions, but also appeared to surpass them all in the ardour of his zeal, and the piety of his general deportment. Often did they all admire the apparent deep humility and astonishing propriety of his expressions when

he was addressing the God of grace as their mouth; and while they all felt and lamented the hardness of their hearts, their backwardness to duty, and the difficulties they experienced in approaching the throne of grace, and saw him constantly pouring out his soul to God with the reverence and freedom of a child, they were often struck with painful doubts of the reality of their own religion, and each one earnestly wished he was like Erford.

These feelings, by leading them to more careful self-examination, might have proved useful to themselves without injury to the object of their admiration, had they carefully concealed them from him, but alas! they were too ready to express them. They discovered so high an opinion of him, that he began to have an high opinion of himself, and from thence commenced an awful series of transgressions.

In proportion as spiritual pride took possession of his heart, he began to attend more to the culture of his talents, than to the spirituality of his affections, and soon to look

down on his associates as far below him, and consider it as a great condescension on his part to converse with them on terms of equality.

By degrees he began to frame slight excuses for occasionally absenting himself from their social meetings; mingled with men of talent and literature, who were enemies to Christianity, and began to take pleasure in their conversations, undervaluing the faithful ministers of Christ for their plainness of speech, and their disregard of ornament in their discourses, and soon beginning to neglect a constant attendance on the public worship of the Sabbath.

His evenings, which had been previously spent at home in reading to, and conversing with his pious mother, he now devoted to the pursuit of dissipating amusements, though for awhile he sought to conceal his conduct from his religious friends, but it could not be long concealed; from listening to, and regarding with pleasure, the prophan and licentious conversation of his companions, he at length began to imitate it, and having oncè loosed

the bridle from his tongue, could soon utter without a blush, the grossest ribaldry—the most daring falsehood—the most blasphemous oath—the most tremendous curse.

The ordinances of God being totally deserted, his sabbaths were spent in the tavern or the brothel, and he herded with the most abject and profligate of mankind.

His young friends lamented the dreadful change that had taken place, but he now absented himself so completely from their company, and from his mother's house, that they had no opportunity to reason with him; all they could do was to pray for him, which they did with much concern and affection for a long season; but at length, on continually hearing fresh accounts of his enormities, they, in general gave him up as an hypocrite and apostate, and ceased to petition the throne of grace for his recovery.

One of them, however, was an exception; dreadfully as Erford had fallen, and abandoned as his present conduct was, this friend, recollecting the past fervency of his prayers,

and the clear views he had received of evangelical truth, with the influence those truths appeared to have over the whole of his conversation for a long season, could not give up the belief that he had received the grace of God in truth, and therefore still entertained the hope that the wretched backslider would be restored, nor ever neglected, for succeeding years, to pray daily for the return of the fugitive.

Meantime the wretched wanderer was seldom heard of but as intoxicated, quarrelling and fighting at the neighbouring fairs and revels.

At length, in a state of inebriety, he enlisted into a regiment under orders for speedy embarkation for the East Indies.

Just before his departure, he came to take leave of his distressed mother, and appeared totally regardless of her tears and lamentations, and it was with great difficulty she prevailed on him to take a pocket bible in his havresack.

Hardened and remorseless, he left his native shores, and during the voyage contracted

an intimacy with some of his comrades who avowed infidel principles, which he endeavoured to embrace, as a last resource against any serious reflections which might intrude, into his mind, and render him uneasy. Arrived at the continent of India, the regiment was soon called into actual service, as it was soon after the commencement of the war with Hyder Ally.

Notwithstanding the hardships he endured, and the dangers he was exposed to in the field, he continued for a long time in the same dreadful state of mind, till one memorable night, when the hostile armies were encamped at no great distance from each other, he was stationed as an out sentinel alone, in a cloudy night, by the side of a deep jungle, with probably not a praying soul within a thousand miles of the spot, when suddenly his mind was irresistibly impressed with the words of the prophet Jeremiah, which fell on him like a thunderbolt: —“ Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God when he led thee by the way? and now what hast thou to do with Egypt, to drink the

waters of Sihor? or what hast thou to do with Assyria to drink the waters of the river? thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee. Know, therefore, and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord of hosts.”

Filled with inexpressible horror, and seized with an universal tremor through his frame, he dropped his musket and fell to the ground, where he lay trembling under a deep sense of his accumulated guilt, and with nothing before his view but a fearful looking-for of judgment; yet not all the terrors of that eternity of misery he saw before him and felt he had deserved, struck him with such bitter anguish as the sense of his vile ingratitude to that compassionate Redeemer, the infinite glories of whose divine character, and the unparalleled condescension of whose love to lost sinners, he now beheld in the most striking light, and though he considered himself as having, by a vile apostacy, for ever excluded himself from all hope of mercy, yet

he felt it impossible to regard the Saviour without feelings of the highest admiration.

Scarcely was he able to rise and resume his arms in time to be relieved from his post, immediately after which he retired to a solitary spot near the camp, where he gave a loose to sorrow.

Several succeeding days and nights were spent in this miserable situation; his long neglected bible was now his only companion; for some time he durst not pray, but at length encouraged by that gracious word, "Though thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet now return again unto me saith the Lord," he ventured to pour out his soul at the Saviour's feet, in humble hope of pardoning mercy, though still mixed with many fears. Now the grief he had occasioned to his mother, and his young companions in religious exercises, fell with peculiar weight on his mind, and he felt the want of society like theirs, nor was there a single individual within his reach who could participate in the least degree the feelings of his mind, or afford him any relief or consolation.

When engaged in his military duties he was obedient and silent, his comrades remarked at length a difference in his manner and conduct, though what it was, and whence it originated they were totally ignorant. When released from duty he was always alone, with no companion but the bible, and at length he found its precious promises the support of his soul, and began to rely on the obedience and sacrifice of the Saviour, with some degree of humble confidence.

Now enjoying somewhat of the consoling influence of a Saviour's love, though mingled with so many painful regrets, he felt the power of that love inspiring his breast with the most tender sentiments of piety to his fellow-sinners, and leading him to embrace every proper opportunity of conversing with them on the important concerns of their souls.

The impressive hints he frequently dropt on this subject to his fellow soldiers, coming so unexpected from a person, who though now his conduct was irreproachable, had been

so lately a ringleader in vice, struck them with astonishment, and in several instances was evidently accompanied with the influences of the Divine Spirit, so that in a little time he had a society of companions in the heavenly road, among whom he was loved and esteemed, and to whom his former falls were made the means of rendering the cautions which the remembrance of them led him to give his new associates more impression on their minds, and more conducive to their steadfastness.

But it is time to return to England, where all his former friends had long supposed him dead. That one solitary youth, who had so long continued to pray for him, still continued his supplications on behalf of the poor backslider if yet alive. Himself had left his former place and business, and after a course of studies at the late Countess of Huntingdon's college at Trevecca, was preaching in that connexion, when one evening, going to preach at a village in the west, he found his mind diverted from the subject on which he

intended to address the people, and powerfully attracted to the consideration of Jeremiah ii. 17, &c. already quoted.

Just before he had began his discourse he observed a pale, thin, and apparently declining young man, enter the place, and take a seat in an obscure corner under the gallery, and as he passed, he thought the features, though altered by fatigue and disease, were not totally unknown to him, yet he could not recollect when or where he had seen him.

During the sermon he observed the stranger much affected, and at the close of the worship, when he descended from the pulpit, he was much surprised when he advanced towards him, and discovered features long endeared to his remembrance. "Surely," said he, "it is not, cannot be." "Erford," interrupted the stranger, "the vile apostate; yet O amazing grace! the wonderfully restored Erford greets you on his return, and intreats you to inform him if his poor mother still lives—and what of those pious youths I so basely deserted." "She lives," returned the preacher, "and notwithstanding

all our companions have long given you up as dead, and they feared lost, your mother and I have never ceased praying for the happy event I now witness." "Then," said he, "I will hasten to morrow to fall down at her feet, and intreat her forgiveness; but O my dear friend, when I entered this place, and heard your well-remembered voice read the very passage by the impression of which on my memory and my heart in the Indies, the Divine Spirit effected my return to the Saviour from whom I had so basely revolted, my feelings almost totally overpowered me, and I could scarcely retain life to listen to your just observations on the text; but though I trust Immanuel has graciously pardoned my sins, he has taken just, yet merciful vengeance on my inventions, for my profligate life in an eastern climate has undermined my once healthy constitution, and I feel so debilitated that I cannot long survive; yet I trust, though we shall soon be separated again by my death, I shall meet you in the world of eternal purity and bliss. How merciful a dispensation

has my sickness been, since it procured my discharge and return to England, to afford you a proof of the Redeemer's ability to save to the uttermost a vile, rebellious, and ungrateful backslider.

The two friends spent the evening together, and the next day travelled in company to their native place. The interview of Erford with his mother, my feeble powers of description cannot paint, nor the joy with which his former associates received him. He lived not long, but a sufficient time to evidence fully that he was the subject of restoring grace, and his exit was tranquil and serene.

This narration was related to the writer by his friend, the preacher, who has since rejoined him in heaven.

Glory to God,

Amen.

THE END.

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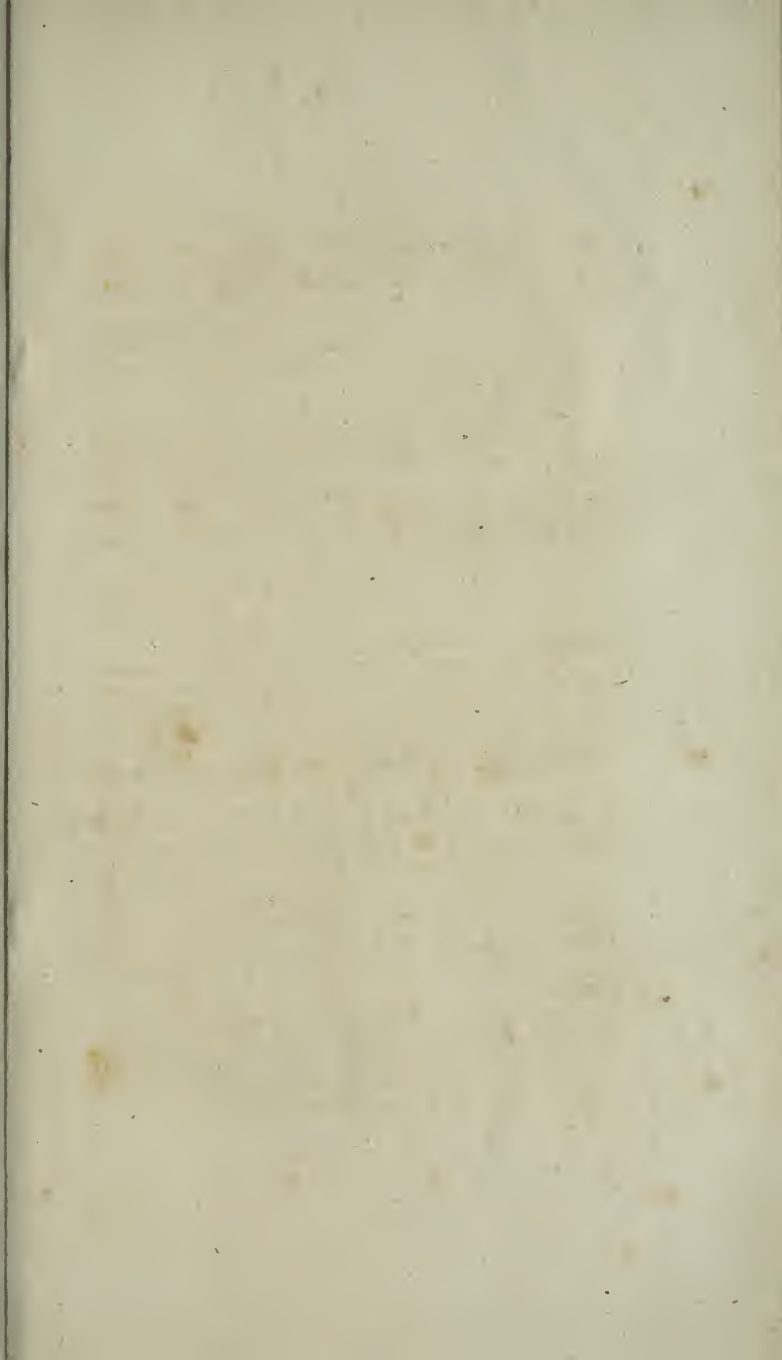
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